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# HISTORY

OF THE

~~DISMISSED~~ EXPEDITION TO RUSSIA,

EMPEROR NAPOLEON

IN THE YEAR 1812.

By GENERAL COUNT PHILIP DE SEGUR.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

Quamquam animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit  
Incipiam— VIRGIL.

FIFTH EDITION

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# HISTORY

OF

## NAPOLÉON'S EXPEDITION TO RUSSIA,

~~IN THE YEAR 1812.~~

### BOOK VIII.

#### CHAPTER I.

WE have seen, that the emperor Alexander, surprised at Wilna amidst his preparations for defence, fled from that city with a disunited army which he could rally only at a hundred leagues distance, between Witepsk and Smolensk. Involved necessarily in the precipitate retreat made by Barclay, that prince had taken refuge at Dryssa, in a camp ill chosen in point of situation, and intrenched at extraordinary expense; a mere point in space compared with a frontier of such vast extent, and which only served the purpose of indicating to the enemy the intended plan of operations.

Alexander, however, at the sight of this camp, and of the Duna, felt relieved from his apprehensions, and considered himself secure behind that river. It was there that he first consented to receive an English agent; so important was it in his estimation to be considered, down to the very latest moment, faithful



to his engagements to France. Whether this was really the result, or only the appearance, of honourable feeling, it is impossible for us to say; but it is certain that at Paris, after the contest had terminated in his favour, he declared, on his honour, to count Daru, "that, notwithstanding the charges alleged against him by Napoleon, this had been his first infraction of the treaty of Tilsit."

He at the same time permitted Barclay to disperse by his emissaries among the French soldiers and their allies those addresses, to induce them to swerve from their duty, which had so much exasperated Napoleon at Klubokoe; efforts which the French considered as contemptible, and the allies as unseasonable.

In other respects the Russian emperor had by no means exhibited himself to his enemies as a general well acquainted with the art of war. They formed their opinion of him in this respect from his having neglected the Berezina, the only natural line of defence of Lithuania; from his eccentric retreat towards the north, while the rest of his army fled towards the south; and lastly, from his Ukase respecting the recruits, dated from Dryssa, which named as rendezvous for them several towns which were almost immediately after taken possession of by the French. His departure, also, from the army, as soon as it began to fight, was freely commented upon.

In the Lithuania which had been recently acquired, every thing, whether in consequence of hurry or from design, had been spared in retreating from it, the produce, the houses, and the inhabitants: nothing had been extorted or exacted: a few only of the most powerful of the nobles had been carried away; their defection would have been of most dangerous example, and in the end their return more difficult, in

consequence of their being more deeply committed; they, moreover, constituted hostages.

In the Lithuania which, for a considerably longer period, had been annexed to the empire, where a mild administration of government, favours skilfully distributed, and longer usage had made the inhabitants forget their former independence, the army had carried off with it whatever they had occasion for, whether men or supplies. Yet, even in this case, it had not been deemed expedient or judicious to exact, from a people of different religion and immature patriotism, the burning of their property; and the only levy ordered, consisted of no more than five males out of every hundred.

But in old Russia, where everything concurred in support of the power of the state, religion, superstition, ignorance, and patriotism, not only had all that had been wanted been made to fall back with the army in its retreat, but whatever was incapable of being carried off had been destroyed, and every man who had not been taken as a recruit for the regular army was converted into a militia-man or cossack.

The interior of the empire being at that time menaced, it became Moscow to furnish an example. That capital, justly denominated by the poets, "Moscow with gilded domes," was an immense and singular assemblage of two hundred and ninety-five churches, and fifteen hundred splendid habitations, together with their gardens and offices. These palaces, built of brick, with the grounds attached to them, intermingled with handsome wooden houses, and even with cottages, were scattered over several square leagues of unequal surface, and were grouped around a lofty, triangular palace whose vast and double enclosure comprising two divisions, and about half a league in circumference,

included, one of them several palaces and churches, and a quantity of uncultivated and stony ground, the other a vast bazaar, a city of merchants, exhibiting the opulence of the four quarters of the world.

These buildings, shops as well as palaces, were all covered with polished and coloured plates of iron. The churches, which were each of them surmounted by a terrace, and by several steeples terminating in gilded globes, the crescent, and finally the cross, recalled to mind the history of the people. They represented Asia and her religion, first triumphant, then subdued, and finally the crescent of Mahomet under the dominion of the cross of Christ.

A single sunbeam made this superb city glitter with a thousand varied colours; and the enchanted traveller halted in ecstasy at the sight. It recalled to his mind the dazzling prodigies with which oriental poets had amused his infancy. On entering within its walls his astonishment increased in proportion to his observation; he recognised among the nobles the usages, manners, and prevailing languages of modern Europe, together with the light and elegant richness of its dress. He saw with surprise the Asiatic luxury and pomp of that of its merchants; and the Grecian costume and flowing beard which distinguished the people. The same variety struck him in the edifices; yet over all there seemed, notwithstanding, to prevail a tinge of peculiarity, an air of semi-civilization just such as Muscovy might be expected to exhibit.

In short, when he observed the grandeur and magnificence of the numerous palaces, the splendour with which they were ornamented, the richness of the equipages, the crowds of devoted slaves and attendants, the brilliancy of the public spectacles, the lively sounds and animating bustle which accompanied the festivals,

galas, and sumptuous assemblies which occurred in one unintermitted round, he conceived himself transported to a city of kings, a congress of sovereigns, who with their various striking manners and splendid retinues, had assembled from every quarter of the world.

They were, however, no more than subjects ; but subjects at once opulent and powerful ; grandees priding themselves in a nobility of high antiquity, strong in their number, their union, and the general family connexion and relationship existing among them, formed in the course of the seven centuries' duration of that capital. They were territorial lords, pluming themselves on residing in the midst of their vast domains ; for the land of almost the whole of the government of Moscow belonged to them, and there they reigned over a million of serfs. In short, they were nobles that regarded Moscow with sentiments both of patriotic and religious elevation, and leaned with confidence and complacency upon a city which they denominated " the cradle and the tomb of their nobility."

Here, in fact, seemed to be the place where the nobles of most illustrious rank and descent were generally born and educated ; hence they appeared to launch into the interesting career of honours and glory ; and here again was the place to which, whether in satisfaction, disgust, or mere disenchantment, on concluding their career they naturally again resorted, to disclose in confidence their complaints and resentments, to enjoy the reputation they had acquired and exert its influence over the young nobility, and finally, far from the seat and the spies of power from which they had now nothing further to expect, to recover those lofty feelings which had been too long bent or prostrated before the throne.

Here, whether their ambition has been successful or

disappointed, in the midst of their adherents, and apparently out of the reach of the court, they have been in the habit of exercising considerable freedom of language. It is a privilege consecrated as it were by time, which they tenaciously cling to, and which their sovereign respects. Being less courtiers they are more citizens. Accordingly, their princes generally entertain a repugnance to visiting this vast depot of glory and commerce, in the midst of nobles whom they have either disgraced or disgusted, who are nearly beyond the reach of their power by their age or their reputation, and whom they feel compelled to humour and manage.

It was necessity that conducted Alexander to it. He went thither from Polotsk, preceded by his proclamations, and expected by the nobles and the merchants. He appeared there first in an assembly of the whole nobility. There every thing was upon a scale of grandeur; the occasion of the meeting, the assembly itself, the orator who addressed it, and the resolutions with which he inspired his audience. His voice was interesting from emotion, and as soon as he had concluded his address, one simultaneous and unanimous exclamation burst apparently from every heart; on every side were heard the few but expressive words, "Sire, ask all! we offer all! accept all!"

One of the nobles then immediately proposed the raising of a militia, and the gift of one peasant out of every twenty-five, in order to constitute it. But he was interrupted by a hundred voices, calling out, "that the country required more, and that they ought to give one serf out of every ten, fully armed, equipped, and provided with three months' provisions!" This was

an offer from merely the government of Moscow of eighty thousand men, and a proportional quantity of warlike supplies.

This sacrifice was forthwith voted, without deliberation; some say even with enthusiasm, and that it was executed in the same manner as long as the danger lasted. Others have been able to discover in the assembly's adoption of what they deem so extravagant a proposition nothing but that feeling of submission or servility which, in the presence of despotic power, swallows up every other.

They add, that at the breaking up of the sitting, the principal nobles were heard complaining to each other of the extravagance of such a grant. "Was the danger then so dreadfully urgent? Did the Russian army, which they had been told amounted to four hundred thousand men, no longer exist? If it did, why deprive them of such a number of their peasants! The service of this militia, they were told, would be but temporary. But how could they ever hope for their return! In reality, there would be far greater reason to fear it! Would their serfs, after seeing all the violence and irregularities of war, bring back their former submission? unquestionably not. They would be found to be imbued with completely new feelings and ideas with which they would infect the various villages, and would propagate a spirit of indocility which would render command irksome and servitude intolerable."

But whatever may be the truth of this statement, the resolution of the assembly was generous, and worthy of so magnanimous a nation. The detail is of little consequence. We know that this is in all cases nearly the same; that every thing is seen to disad-

vantage when inspected too closely; and, in short, that nations must be judged of by masses and general results.

Alexander then addressed the merchants, but with more brevity. He ordered that proclamation to be read to them in which Napoleon was represented as "a man of perfidy and blood, a Moloch, who, with treason in his heart, and honour on his lips, came to blot out Russia from the face of the world."

At these words, the manly and sanguine countenances of his whole auditory, to whom their long beards gave an appearance at once venerable, imposing and almost ferocious, are said to have been absolutely kindled to fury. Their eyes glared. They were seized with a convulsion of rage; and their writhing arms, their clenched fists, and half-suffocated curses, and gnashing teeth, evinced the maddened violence of their feelings. The effect corresponded. Their president, who is chosen by themselves, proved himself worthy of his situation: he put down his name first, for fifty thousand rubles. That sum comprised two-thirds of his fortune; and he paid it on the following day.

These merchants are divided into three classes, and it was proposed that a certain contribution should be fixed for each. But one of those who were included in the last class declared that his patriotism would not submit to be limited, and at the same moment put himself down for a sum far higher than the standard proposed; and the rest, to a greater or less extent, followed his example. Their first feelings were dexterously turned to account. There was every thing at hand that could tend to bind them irrevocably to their pledge, while they were still assembled, while each in-

dividual was operated upon by the contagion of feeling which pervades large bodies, and under the excitement of the presence of the emperor.

This patriotic contribution amounted, it is said, to two millions of rubles. The other governments repeated, like echoes, the national cry of Moscow. The emperor accepted all. But all could not be immediately produced; and when, in order to complete his work, he laid claim to the rest of the promised aid, he was obliged to recur to force; the danger which had daunted some and animated others being at that time removed to a distance.

## CHAPTER II.

IN the meantime, Smolensk was soon in possession of the enemy. Napoleon was at Wiazma, and terror prevailed at Moscow; and, although the great battle had not yet been lost, the inhabitants were beginning to abandon that capital.

In his proclamations, the governor-general Count Rostopchin said to the women, "that he would not detain them; that the less there was of fear, the less there would be of danger; but that, with respect to their brothers and husbands, they ought to remain, and, if they did not, they would cover themselves with ignominy." He then added some encouraging details respecting the forces of the enemy. "They consisted of a hundred and fifty thousand men, who were reduced to eat horse-flesh. The emperor Alexander was now coming back to his faithful capital: and eighty-three thousand Russians, consisting of recruits



and militia, with eighty pieces of cannon, were marching towards Borodino, to join Kutusof."

He concluded with observing, " If these forces are not sufficient, I will say to you, my Muscovite friends, let us march also ! We will collect together a hundred thousand men, and taking with us the image of the holy virgin, and a hundred pieces of cannon, we will put a final blow to the affair at once."

It has been remarked as a completely local singularity, that the greater number of these proclamations were written in the style of the Bible, and consisted of poetic prose.

At the same time, not far from Moscow, and by the orders of Alexander, a German artificer was employed in constructing an enormous balloon. The first destination of this winged aërostat was to skim at no great elevation over the French army, single out its chief, and destroy him by a shower of iron and fire : many experiments were made with it, but all failed, the springs of the wings being in every case broken.

But Rostopchin, pretending to persevere in the plan, ordered, it is said the preparation of an immense quantity of fuses, and various other combustible materials. Moscow herself was to be the grand infernal machine whose nocturnal and sudden explosion should at once blow up the emperor and his army. If the enemy escaped that danger, at least he would no longer have an asylum or resources ; and the horror excited by so great a disaster, of which it would be very easy successfully to accuse him, as had been the case with respect to the burning of Smolensk, Dorogobouje, Viazma, and Gjatz, would rouse the whole of Russia to vengeance.

Such was the formidable scheme of this noble descendant of some of the greatest conquerors of Asia.

It was conceived without effort, matured with care, and executed without hesitation. This Russian nobleman has been seen since at Paris. He is a man of regular habits, a good husband, and an excellent father; he has a superior and cultivated mind, and is mild, affable, and highly attractive in society; but, like some of his fellow-citizens, he blends ancient energy with modern civilization.

Henceforward his name belongs to history. He is, however, entitled only to the largest share of the honour of this sacrifice. The great work had before commenced at Smolensk; he completed it. The resolution, like every thing that is great and entire in itself, was admirable; the motive was sufficient and justified by the success; the self-devotion unprecedented, and so extraordinary, so far beyond the usual limits of patriotic zeal, that it becomes the historian to pause in order to investigate, comprehend, and reflect upon it\*.

A single individual, in the midst of a vast empire upon the point of being nearly overthrown, contemplated its danger with a firm and intrepid eye. He fully examined and appreciated it, and ventured per-

\* It is well known that Count Rostopchin has in writing disclaimed having had any share in this great event; but we should rather depend upon the statements both of Russians and Frenchmen, who were witnesses and actors in this grand drama, all of whom, without exception, persevere in ascribing the whole honour of that disinterested and generous resolution to that nobleman. Several of them appear even to think that Count Rostopchin, ever animated by that magnanimous devotion which will henceforth render his name imperishable, declines receiving the immortal honour due to this distinguished action, in order that the whole glory of it may be ascribed to the patriotism of the nation of which he has become one of the most distinguished characters.

haps without any express or even implied commission, on the awful responsibility of determining for every corporate and individual interest how far they should be sacrificed to meet the exigency. Although merely a subject, he decided, without the consent of his sovereign on the destiny of the state ; a nobleman himself, he pronounced the destruction of the palaces of all the nobles, without previously obtaining or asking their permission ; protector by the nature of his office of a numerous population, of a multitude of opulent merchants, of one of the largest capitals of Europe, he devoted to destruction all their fortunes and establishments, and the entire city itself ; he himself committed to the ravages of conflagration the most finished and splendid of its palaces, and then, with a feeling of tranquillity, gratification, and even pride, remained in the midst of all these injured, ruined, and exasperated interests.

What then could be the just and adequate motive which inspired him with this amazing confidence. In resolving on the burning of Moscow it was by no means his object to famish the enemy, as he had previously removed from that immense city its stores of provisions. Neither could it be to deprive the French army of shelter, as it was impossible to imagine that out of eight thousand houses and churches scattered over so large a space, a sufficient number would not escape the flames to accommodate with lodging a hundred and fifty thousand men.

He was, moreover, fully aware, that by this conduct he was altogether failing in the apparently important duty of co-operating in what was conceived to be Alexander's plan of the campaign, the object of which was to draw on and detain Napoleon in the country till winter should surround and deliver him

up completely defenceless to the whole Russian nation in arms. For the flames would unquestionably, it might be inferred, impart some light to the conqueror, and evidently deprive his invasion of its object. They would consequently induce him to abandon the country while he had time before him to do so, and determine him to return for winter-quarters to Lithuania, a determination which would prepare for Russia a second campaign more formidable than the first.

But in this momentous crisis, Rostopchin contemplated two principal dangers; one, menacing the national honour, that of a disgraceful peace extorted from the emperor, and dictated at Moscow; the other, a peril rather political than military. He was more apprehensive of the enemy's seductions than of his arms, and dreaded revolution more than conquest.

Being determined against entering into any treaty, the governor foresaw, that, in the midst of that populous capital which the Russians themselves denominate the oracle and example of the whole empire, Napoleon, in order to terminate the contest, would have recourse to the weapons of revolutionary warfare, the only ones indeed which he would then have remaining. It was for these reasons that he decided on raising a barrier of flames between that great captain and all possible pernicious and fatal weaknesses, on whatever side they might be found, whether on the part of the throne or the nobility, and more especially between a population of serfs and the soldiers of a free and independent nation; in short, between these soldiers and the mass of artisans, tradesmen, and merchants, which form in Moscow the elements of an intermediate class, like that for which the French revolution had been accomplished.

Every thing was prepared in silence, without the

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slightest degree of suspicion on the part of the inhabitants in general, the proprietors of every description, and perhaps of the emperor himself. The nation knew nothing about its sacrificing itself. This is so perfectly true, that, when the moment of execution arrived, we heard the inhabitants who had fled for refuge to the churches execrating with bitterness the work of destruction. Those who beheld it from a distance, even the wealthiest of the nobles, equally deluded with their slaves, charged it upon us; in short, those who had arranged and effected it threw on us all the ignominy and horror of it, thus declining no task of ruin by which they could render us hateful, and regardless of the curses of their victims as long as those curses fell not upon themselves but upon us.

The silence observed by Alexander left it doubtful whether he approved or blamed this grand determination. The part which he took with respect to the catastrophe is overhung with mystery among the Russians themselves; they are either ignorant or silent on the subject, the natural effect of despotism, which can command at its pleasure either ignorance or silence.

Some of them are of opinion, that no man in the whole empire but the emperor would have loaded himself with so terrible a responsibility. His conduct afterwards disavowed without decidedly disapproving. Others imagine that the scheme contemplated and eventually executed was one of the causes of his withdrawing from the army, and that, from a reluctance to being considered as either having prepared or justified it, he declined becoming a witness of it.

With respect to the general abandonment of habitations beyond Smolensk, it was compulsory, as the Russian army always defended them, occasioning our army to take possession of them sword in hand, and

proclaiming us to the world as monsters of destruction.

This emigration cost the country but little. The peasants who resided near the high-road soon reached, through by-paths, some other villages belonging to their lords, in which they were well received and accommodated.

The desertion of their huts, which were formed of trunks of trees laid one over another, which a mere hatchet was sufficient for erecting, and the whole furniture of which consisted of a bench, a table, and an image, was scarcely any sacrifice on the part of these serfs, who possessed no property of their own, who did not even belong personally to themselves, and who felt that their masters would provide for them wherever they went, as they were their property, and constituted the whole of their revenue.

Besides, these peasants, in taking with them their carts, utensils, and cattle, carried off every thing; the greater part of them being able to provide for themselves lodging, clothing, and every thing else: for these men are uniformly only in the early stages to civilization, and far from having reached that division of labour which indicates the extension and considerable advance of commerce and society.

But in the towns, and more particularly in the great city of Moscow, how was it possible to induce the inhabitants to quit such important and wealthy establishments, so many social and individual accommodations, in short, so much moveable and immoveable property? Yet the total evacuation of Moscow was attended with no more difficulty than that of the smallest village. In that metropolis, as at Vienna, Berlin, and Madrid, the chief of the nobility did not hesitate to withdraw at our approach; for they appeared

to imagine that their remaining would be treason. But there was this difference from the three other cases : that here, merchants, artisans, labourers, all considered it their duty to retreat, as well as the most powerful of the nobles. There was no need of commanding it: the Russian population is not sufficiently enlightened to judge for itself; it has not discrimination enough to perceive nice or even perhaps sometimes strong shades of distinction. The example of the nobles was enough. A few strangers, remaining in Moscow, might have given them correct ideas upon the subject, but of these some were exiled, and the rest concealed or withdrew themselves through terror.

It was, moreover, easy to impress the terrific anticipation of every species of profanation and pillage on the minds of a people so remote from every other, and who inhabited a city which had so frequently been sacked and burnt by the Tartars. Besides, the only object in staying till the arrival of an impious and ferocious enemy would of course be to resist him. It was incumbent upon all who, from whatever cause, were incompetent to this to avoid his approach with horror, as they hoped for salvation both here and hereafter. Thus did obedience, honour, religion, fear, all indicate the expediency and even duty of their flight, with every thing valuable that they could possibly carry with them.

A fortnight before the invasion, the removal of the archives, the public chests and treasure, and the departure of the nobles and principal merchants with the most valuable of their property, pointed out to the rest of the inhabitants what they also had to do. The agents of the governor, who was anxious to hasten the evacuation of the city, were every day busily engaged in superintending this emigration.

On the 3rd of September, a Frenchwoman, at the risk of being sacrificed by the exasperated Moscovites, ventured to quit her place of concealment. She wandered for a long time through large divisions of the city, astonished at the solitude in which she found herself, when a distant and mournful sound suddenly struck her with dismay. It seemed like the funeral requiem of this immense city. Motionless she looked around her, and saw approaching a vast multitude of men and women in deep distress, carrying off with them their little property and their consecrated images, and dragging after them their helpless children. Their priests, loaded with the sacred symbols of religion, led the way, invoking heaven in hymns of lamentation which all repeated after them with tears.

This long train of disconsolate emigrants, on reaching the city gates, passed through with the most evident reluctance and hesitation. They turned to give a last parting look, a final adieu to their sacred city ; but in a short time their groans and lamentations were lost in the immense plains by which it is surrounded.

### CHAPTER III.

THUS in detail, or in masses, did the population of Moscow betake itself to flight. The roads to Cazan, Voladimir, and Jaroslaf, were covered to the extent of forty leagues with fugitives on foot, and several uninterrupted rows of carriages, of every possible description. However, the measures adopted by Rosstopchin, to prevent despondency and preserve order



retained many of the inhabitants in the city till the latest moment.

This circumstance must also be attributed in some degree to the hope which had been inspired by the appointment of Kutusof, to the false intelligence of an important advantage gained over the enemy at Borodino, and, with respect to the less opulent of the inhabitants, to their reluctance to quit the only habitation they possessed, and finally to the insufficiency of carriages, notwithstanding the extraordinary abundance of them in that country. The immense requisitions of these which had been made for the army was undoubtedly one cause of the difficulty, to which it must be added that their vehicles were generally made small and light to adapt them to a sandy soil and to roads rather tracked out by previous travelling than regularly constructed.

It was at this time that Kutusof, after being conquered at Borodino, sent off despatches in every direction, announcing that he had obtained a victory. He deceived in this manner Moscow and Petersburg, and even the commanders of the other Russian armies themselves. Alexander communicated the misstatement thus made to himself, to his allies. In the first transports of his joy, he was seen hastening to the altars, liberally bestowing honours and pecuniary rewards on the army, and on the family of its commander, ordering festivals, in short, offering thanksgivings to heaven, and nominating Kutusof field marshal, for what in fact was a defeat.

The Russians in general affirm that their emperor was grossly imposed upon by this untrue report: and they still endeavour to ascertain the causes of an audacity which obtained for Kutusof in the first instance unbounded favours which were never afterwards

withdrawn, and in the next, as is stated, the most formidable menaces which were never put in execution.

If we may credit some of his countrymen, who might possibly be his enemies, he was influenced to this conduct by two motives; in the first place, to avoid enfeebling by unfavourable news that small share of energy of character which the Russians generally, although falsely, attributed to Alexander; and in the next place, as he made all haste that the despatch might reach Petersburg on his sovereign's birth-day, his object is stated to have been the acquisition of those rewards of which these anniversaries occasion the distribution.

At Moscow, however, the delusion was of short duration. The report of the destruction of nearly half his army arrived almost immediately after the battle by that extraordinary power of communication often attendant on momentous and eventful decisions of fortune, and which as it were occasions them to reverberate from great and enormous distances almost at the moment of their actual occurrence. The language, however, of the chiefs, who alone were authorised to utter their sentiments, continued to be lofty and menacing, and many of the inhabitants believed it and remained; although every succeeding day their anxiety became more and more painful. Almost at the same moment they might have been observed transported with rage, elated with hope, and overwhelmed by consternation.

It happened that while, under the influence of deep agitation, they were prostrating themselves before the public altars, or before the images of their saints in their private habitations, entertaining no hope of succour but from heaven, their ears suddenly caught the sounds of shouting and acclamation. They instantly

rushed into the squares and streets to ascertain the cause. There, were found multitudes of people in a paroxysm of admiration, gazing with eagerness and transport upon the cross of the principal church. A vulture was observed to have entangled himself in the chains which supported it, and remained, in consequence, in a state of suspension. This was hailed as a decisive and most cheering omen by a people whose natural superstition was increased by the momentousness of the crisis in which they were then involved. In the same manner as the vulture, was God going to deliver Napoleon into their hands.

Rostopchin turned to account all these movements which he excited or controlled according as they were favourable or adverse to his object. Among the prisoners taken from the enemy, he had selected the most squalid and miserable-looking of the number, in order to show them to the people, that from the sight of their weakness they might themselves derive confidence and courage. In the mean time he was busily occupied in removing out of Moscow every description of provisions, to sustain the vanquished and famish the conquerors. This measure he could easily accomplish, as Moscow obtained its supplies in spring and autumn only by water conveyance, and in winter by that of sledges.

He was still preserving, in connexion with some remaining gleam of hope, the order so absolutely requisite, particularly in such a great abandonment and flight, when the wrecks of the disaster of Borodino presented themselves to notice, and commanded instant and forcible attention. The long convoy of the wounded, their bitter groans of anguish, the black blood which had imbrued and now lay clotted on their garments, their opulent and powerful lords mutilated

and overthrown like the meanest in the ranks, these circumstances, to a city which had been so long exempted from war, formed a spectacle at once of novelty and consternation. The police doubled its usual activity, but the terror it inspired was wholly unable effectually to contend against a terror far greater still.

Rostopchin then again addressed the inhabitants, and declared "that he was going to defend Moscow to the last drop of his blood; that he would grapple with the enemy in the streets; that the courts of justice were already closed, which, however, was of little consequence, as they were by no means necessary in order to bring malefactors to justice." He then added "that within two days he would give the signal." He recommended them to arm themselves with axes, and especially with three-pronged forks, "as a Frenchman was no heavier than a sheaf of corn." With respect to the wounded, "he was going," he observed, "to order masses to be said for them, and the water to be blessed, in order to bring about a speedy cure. On the morrow," he added, "he was going to Kutusof to decide on the last measures to be taken for exterminating their enemies; after which," said he, "we will send these guests to the devil, and having despatched their souls out of their bodies, will set to work with heart and hand to pound the miscreants to dust."

In fact, Kutusof had not despaired of the salvation of his country. After having made use of the militia during the battle of Borodino to serve out ammunition and carry off the wounded, he had just formed out of them the third rank of his army. At Mojaisk, the firm and intrepid appearance which he assumed, obtained for him time to infuse order into his retreat, and to select the least injured from the mass of his wounded, abandoning those deemed incurable to cure.

barrass the enemy's army with the care of them. Farther on, at Zelkowo, the impetuosity of Murat had received a check. At length, on the 13th of September, Moscow saw the fires of Russian bivouacs.

There the sentiment of national pride, an admirable position, and the expensive and judicious labours by which it had been improved, united in impressing the conclusion, that the commander was resolved to save the capital or perish in the attempt. He nevertheless hesitated ; and, whether through policy or prudence, he terminated his indecision by leaving the governor of Moscow under the full burden of responsibility.

The Russian army, in this position, of Fili, in advance of Moscow, comprised ninety thousand men, of whom six thousand were Cossacks, sixty-five thousand veteran troops who remained out of the hundred and twenty-one thousand present at the Mosqua, and twenty thousand recruits, half of them armed with muskets and half with pikes.

The French army, which was a hundred and thirty thousand strong on the eve of the great battle, had lost about forty thousand at Borodino ; there remained of course ninety thousand. Some regiments of recruits, and the divisions Laborde and Pino, had just united with it ; it was, therefore, still nearly a hundred thousand strong when it arrived in front of Moscow. Its march was impeded by six hundred and seven pieces of cannon, two thousand five hundred artillery-waggons, and five thousand baggage-waggons ; it had only ammunition sufficient for one day's fighting. Perhaps Kutusof compared his real rather than his numerical strength with ours. It is, however, impossible on this subject to go beyond conjecture, for he assigned no motives for his retreat but purely military ones.

It is certain that the old general deceived the go

vernor to the last moment. "He had even sworn, by his grey hairs, that he would perish with him before Moscow," when Rostopchin was suddenly apprized that in the night it had been resolved in the camp, at a council of war, to abandon the capital without fighting.

At this intelligence the governor was extremely exasperated, but remained nevertheless firm to his purpose. Time pressed, and not a moment was to be lost. No attempts were any longer made to conceal from Moscow the fate destined for it; the small remainder of the inhabitants made such attempts appear not worth making. Besides, it was necessary to urge them to seek safety by flight.

At night, therefore, emissaries were employed to knock at every door and announce the burning. Lighted fuses were thrown into every favourable opening, and especially into the shops covered with iron belonging to the merchants' quarter. The pumps were carried away; desolation mounted to its highest point, and every individual, according to his constitution and character, appeared agitated by anxiety or quickened to decision. The greater number collected in groups in the squares, crowding, questioning, and mutually seeking counsel and information from each other; many wandered about as if without aim or object, some deprived of their senses by terror, others in a state of furious exasperation: at length the army, the last hope of the people, was abandoning them; it was beginning to pass through the city; and in its retreat was hurrying along with it the still numerous remains of the population.

It passed through the Kolomna gate, surrounded by an immense multitude of women, children, and old men, in a state of despair. The fields were covered

with them; they fled in all directions, along every by-road and path, across the fields, without any victuals, loaded with such of their effects as in the height of their distress they could most conveniently lay hold of. Some were observed who, for want of horses, harnessed themselves to their carts, and thus drew the youngest of their children, a sick wife, a worn down and sinking parent, or whatever they regarded as of peculiar value. The woods served them for shelter, and they subsisted upon the pity and generosity of their countrymen.

On that day the sad drama was closed by a tremendous catastrophe. The last day of Moscow had arrived, and Rostopchin collected together all those whom he had been able to retain and arm. The prisons were thrown open. A squalid and disgusting crowd issued tumultuously from these mansions of despair. They poured in a transport of ferocious joy into the streets. Two individuals, a Russian and a Frenchman, the one accused of treason, the other of some political imprudence, were dragged violently from the midst of this horde of offenders, and hurried away before Rostopchin. He reproached the Russian with his treason.

The person accused was the son of a merchant. He had been apprehended in the act of stirring up the people to revolt. The most alarming part of the case was his having been discovered to be a member of a sect of German *illuminati*, who were denominated Martinists, an association of superstitious independents. His audacity had not deserted him even in chains. It was feared for a moment that the spirit of equality had penetrated even into Russia. However, he did not implicate any as accomplices.

At this critical moment, the father of the prisoner

arrived hastily and alone. Every person expected to see him intercede for his son, but instead of doing so he loudly demanded his execution. The governor allowed him a few moments to speak to him for the last time, and give him his blessing. "I bless the traitor!" said the maddened Russian; and at the same instant, turning towards his son, he cursed him in a tone and with gestures calculated to inspire the deepest horror.

This was the signal for execution. The unhappy victim was struck by a sabre, which, however, was wielded by an unsteady hand. He fell, but merely wounded; and possibly the arrival of the French might have saved him, if the surrounding spectators had not discovered that he still survived. The enraged multitude leaped over the barriers, rushed in upon him, and in a moment tore him limb from limb.

The Frenchman in the mean time remained almost petrified with terror, when Rostopchin at length turning towards him said, "As for you, who are a Frenchman, it was natural for you to desire the arrival of the French; you are therefore discharged; forget not, however, to tell your countrymen that Russia had only one traitor, who has met with his deserts." Then addressing the ignorant and brutal rabble around him, he called them the children of Russia, and recommended it to them to expiate their offences by serving their country. He at length left, and was almost the last to leave that unfortunate and devoted city, and rejoined the Russian army.

The great city of Moscow, from that moment, belonged neither to the Russians nor the French, but to the banditti of malefactors whose violence submitted only to the control of some officers and soldiers of police. They were organised; each had his post assigned him; and they then dispersed every man to his



station, that the pillage, devastation, and burning might break out in every part at once.

#### CHAPTER IV.

ON the same day, the 14th of September, Napoleon, convinced at length that Kutusof had not thrown himself upon his right flank, rejoined his advanced guard. He mounted his horse a few leagues from Moscow. He marched slowly and circumspectly, ordered the woods and ravines to be sounded before him, and the summit of every height to be ascended, in order to discover the enemy's army. A battle was expected, the ground was favourable for it, the works had been marked out; but every thing had been abandoned, and not the slightest resistance was to be met with.

At length the last height that had remained to be passed over was gained; it borders upon Moscow, and commands it; it is called the "Mount of Salvation," because from the top of it, at the sight of their holy city, the inhabitants make the sign of the cross and prostrate themselves on the ground. Our light troops soon gained the summit. It was two o'clock, and the great city was glittering with a thousand colours in the sun. Struck with astonishment at the spectacle, they halted, and exclaimed in admiration, "Moscow! Moscow!" All then quickened their march, and at length ran forward in disorder till at last the whole army clapping their hands, repeated the exclamation, "Moscow! Moscow!" in a transport of joy; as mariners cry "land! land!" at the end of a long and dangerous voyage.

At the sight of this golden city, this brilliant clasp

of Europe and Asia, this superb rendezvous, where the luxury, the customs, and the arts of the two finest divisions of the world meet all together, we halted with feelings of contemplative and proud elevation. What a day of glory had at last arrived! How naturally, and indeed necessarily, would it constitute the most splendid recollection of our whole lives! We felt that this was the moment when all our actions would command the attention of the astonished world, and that the least important of our movements would now become materials for history.

Over this immense and imposing theatre we conceived ourselves moving in splendid procession amidst the acclamations of surrounding nations; and, elated at the consciousness of raising our own grateful age higher in fame than all which had preceded it, we viewed it with pride as great through our grandeur, and splendid in our glory.

On our return, an event already so sincerely desired, with what even respectful and deferential attention, with what absolute enthusiasm should we be received by our wives, our fellow-citizens, and our fathers. For the remainder of our lives we should be considered as select and superior beings whom they would behold only with astonishment, and listen to only with intense curiosity and admiration. They would hasten to meet us on our passage, and would hail with welcome and rapture our slightest observations. This miraculous conquest would surround us with a halo of glory; and henceforward the very element in which we breathed would be deemed to be impregnated with an air of prodigies and marvels.

And even when these lofty ideas gave place to more subdued and moderate sentiments, we observed that here was in reality the termination which

had been promised to our labours; that here at last we ought to stop, as we could no longer be surpassed by ourselves after an expedition equally worthy of admiration with that of Egypt, and which successfully rivalled all the celebrated and successful invasions of antiquity.

At this moment of elevation, all dangers and sufferings were forgotten. It seemed impossible to purchase at too dear a rate, the distinguished, the splendid satisfaction of being able to say for the remainder of life, "I belonged to the army of Moscow."

And sincerely, my friends, even now in the midst of our humiliation, and although that humiliation must be dated from that fatal city, this lofty and interesting consciousness has virtue sufficient to inspire us with consolation and lift up again the heads that have been so severely bowed down by misfortune!

Napoleon himself had hastened forwards to the view. He stopped in evident transport; an exclamation of self-gratulation fell from his lips. From the day of the great battle the marshals under feelings of some alienation had kept aloof; but at the sight of captive Moscow, on the intelligence of the arrival of a flag of truce, struck with such an important result, and intoxicated with the enthusiasm of glory, they forgot all their vexations and complaints. They were seen crowding round the emperor with delight, paying homage to his success, and already strongly tempted to ascribe to the foresight of his genius the little trouble and care he had shown to complete his victory on the 17th.

But in the mind of Napoleon the first burst of feeling was never of long duration. He had too many important concerns to dwell upon to give himself up long to his sensations. His first exclamation was,

“ There at last, then, is that famous city.” And his second, “ It was high time !”

His eye, now intently fixed upon that capital, expressed nothing but impatience. He imagined that he saw in that the whole Russian empire. Those walls enclosed the whole of his hopes, peace, the expenses of the war, and immortal glory ; and accordingly his ardent looks were directed to all its avenues. When, then, would those gates open ? When should they see the deputation approaching, which was to lay at his feet its wealth, its population, its senate, and the principal of the Russian nobility. Then, the enterprise which he had so rashly engaged in, being brought by his audacity to so successful a termination, would be deemed the result of profound combination ; his imprudence would become genius ; and his victory of the Mosqua, incomplete as it had been, would be considered the most brilliant exploit of his arms. Thus every thing which might have turned to his ruin would contribute to his glory ; this day would decide whether he should be regarded as the greatest or the rashest of men ; it was, in short, a day in which he should either have erected for himself an altar, or prepared his grave.

In the meantime he began to entertain a feeling of uneasiness. Already, both on his left and on his right, he saw the hostile city attacked by Prince Eugene and Poniatowski, and in front Murat had reached the suburbs, yet there was not the slightest appearance of the deputation. There had been no arrival from it but that of an officer from Miloradowitch, who had been sent to announce that that general would set fire to the city, if his rear-guard were not allowed time to evacuate it.

Napoleon readily granted every thing. The fore-

most troops of the two armies were for a few instants intermingled. Murat was recognised by the Cossacks, who, uniting in their manner the familiarity of pastoral life, with the expressiveness peculiar to the natives of the southern climates, crowded around him with eagerness, and by their gestures and exclamations extolled his bravery and intoxicated him with their admiration. The king took the watches of his officers to distribute among these still barbarous warriors. One of them denominated him his *hettman*. 18033

Murat was for a moment tempted to believe that among these officers he should find a new Mazeppa; or that he should himself become one; he imagined that he had gained their attachment, and won them to his purpose. This short armistice fed the hopes of Napoleon; so greatly, in his actual circumstances, did he feel the necessity of self-delusion. It amused him for the space of two hours.

In the mean time the day was now passing away, and Moscow remained sad, silent, and, as it were, lifeless. The emperor's anxiety increased; the impatience of the soldiers became more difficult to be controlled. A few officers penetrated within its walls. "Moscow was deserted!"

At this intelligence, which he repelled with considerable irritation, Napoleon descended the Mount of Salvation, and advanced towards Moscow and the Dorogomilow gate. He stopped again at the entrance of this barrier, but perfectly in vain. Murat urged him to go forward. "Well," said he, "enter then, since they will have it so." He recommended the observance of the strictest discipline: he still cherished hopes. "Perhaps," said he, "the inhabitants do not exactly know the way to surrender; for here every thing is new, they to us, and we to them."

Then, however, reports began to thicken ; and all of them coincided. Some Frenchmen who had been residents at Moscow, ventured to quit the asylum in which they had for some days concealed themselves to avoid the fury of the populace, and by them the fatal intelligence was confirmed. The emperor called for Daru, and said aloud, “ Moscow deserted ! a most unlikely event ! We must enter it and ascertain the fact. Go and bring before me the boyars.” He conceived that these men, in the obstinacy of their pride or the agitation of their terror, were clinging tenaciously to their native homes ; and, although hitherto his desires had always been promptly gratified by the submissions of the vanquished, he intended in this instance to conciliate their confidence and anticipate their requests.

How indeed did it seem possible to conceive that so many sumptuous palaces, and splendid temples, and wealthy factories, should be abandoned by their owners like the miserable huts which they had passed on their march. Daru had now returned, having failed in his object. • Not a single Muscovite was to be met with : no smoke was seen ascending from the meanest hearth ; nor was the slightest noise to be heard throughout that populous and extensive city, its three hundred thousand inhabitants seeming all dumb and motionless as by enchantment. There was the silence of the desert.

Such, however, was the tenaciousness of Napoleon, that he still persisted and waited. At last an officer, determined on pleasing, or from a persuasion that every thing which the emperor desired ought to be performed, entered the city, and seized upon five or six vagabonds, whom he drove before his horse to the spot where the emperor was, conceiving that he had brought a deputation. At the first reply made by these

wretched beings Napoleon perceived that he had before him only a few ignorant labourers.

Then it was that he ceased to doubt about the entire evacuation of Moscow, and completely lost the hope which he had rested on that city. He raised his shoulders, and, with that air of scorn which he was accustomed to express for everything which thwarted or opposed his wishes, he exclaimed, "Ah! the Russians are as yet little aware what effect the capture of their capital will have upon them."

## CHAPTER V.

MURAT, with his long and close column of cavalry, had entered Moscow for more than an hour. They penetrated into that gigantic body, and found it as yet uninjured but inanimate. Struck with surprise at the immense solitude, they responded to the silence of this modern Thebes by a taciturnity equally impressive. With a species of secret and perhaps superstitious horror these brave men listened to the sounds of their horses' feet re-echoed from the walls of the deserted palaces. They were astonished in the midst of such numerous habitations of man to hear nothing but themselves. No one thought for a moment of stopping or of plundering either from a due feeling of apprehensive caution, or, because great and polished nations, when in possession of the capitals of their enemies, those centres, not merely of opulence but of civilization, are proud of showing by the correctness and control of their demeanour that they have a proper respect for themselves.

In their silent advance they observed with attention

this powerful and celebrated city, a city which must have commanded no little notice even had it been surrounded by a territory rich and populous, but was far more surprising with nothing round it but such deserts. It resembled a verdant and brilliant Oasis. They had at first been struck by the sudden appearance of so many magnificent palaces. But these they now noticed to be intermingled with cottages or even huts, a circumstance which implied the absence of a natural and happy gradation of society, and that luxury did not there follow but precede industry, while in the ordinary course of things it would be only a more or less necessary consequence of it.

Here more particularly prevailed and domineered that inequality which is the bane of human society ; which produces pride in some, debasement in others, and corruption in all. And yet the generous abandonment of all this grandeur and accommodation proved that this luxury, excessive as it was, although not yet able to supply its own demands, and obliged to depend on other countries for its gratifications, had by no means destroyed the energy and magnanimity of the Russian nobility. .

They thus advanced through the city, sometimes under the influence of surprise, sometimes of pity, and more frequently under that of a noble enthusiasm. Many adverted to the records of great conquests transmitted down to us by history ; but the effect and the intention were to feed our self-complacency, and not to excite our circumspection ; for no one admitted for a moment that there could be the slightest room for comparison ; the conquerors of antiquity were at an almost infinite distance behind us. We experienced, in fact, an elevation of feeling arising from a source which is the next in value to virtue, that is from glory.



Then succeeded a feeling of melancholy, which perhaps was a natural consequence of exhaustion by a series of such new and powerful sensations, or might be the effect of that insulated position in which we now found ourselves, arising from an extraordinary elevation, and from the vast void in which we were wandering, from which, as from some exalted pinnacle, we contemplated that boundlessness and infinitude in which our feeble individuality felt lost: for in proportion to the height of the ascent the horizon enlarges, and human littleness becomes more impressively observable.

In the midst of these meditations and feelings, on a sudden the fire of small arms attracted all our attention. The column halted. Its hindmost horses still covered the plain. Its centre was passing through and involved in one of the longest streets of the city. Its head was near the Kremlin. The gates of that citadel appeared to be closed: but from within its inclosure issued the most savage yells; and a few men and women of most disgusting and villanous aspect were observed, fully armed, upon its walls. They were in a state of beastly intoxication, and uttered the most horrid imprecations. Murat sent them messages of peace, but without the least effect; and it became necessary to force the gates with cannon.

We penetrated into the place and into the midst of these squalid and ferocious miscreants, partly with their permission, and partly by force. One of them rushed towards the king, and endeavoured to kill one of his officers. We thought it sufficient to disarm him; but he again flew at his intended victim, threw him on the ground endeavouring to suffocate him, and, when he found his arms seized and confined, strove to tear him to pieces with his teeth. These were the

only Moscovites who had waited for our coming, and who seemed to have been left as a savage pledge and sample of the national antipathy against us.

It was, however, easily and clearly observable that this patriotic fury was by no means as yet universal. Five hundred recruits who had been forgotten and left behind in the Kremlin, saw this scene without any apparent emotion, and dispersed at the first summons. A little further we overtook a convoy of provisions, the escort of which immediately laid down their arms. Several thousands of stragglers and deserters remained willingly in the power of our advanced guard. The advanced guard left the duty of collecting and disposing of them to the corps which marched next to it, that corps devolved it on the following, and so on in succession; so that in fact they continued free in the very midst of us till the burning and pillage of the city pointed out their duty to them, and rallied them under one bitter and overpowering hatred, in which state they departed to join Kutusof.

Murat, who had been detained by the Kremlin only for a few moments, dispersed this mob, whom he looked down upon with contempt. Ardent and indefatigable, as he had before shown himself in Italy and in Egypt, after passing over nine hundred leagues and engaging in sixty battles to reach Moscow, he passed through that splendid city without condescending to halt in it; and, in eager pursuit of the Russian rear-guard, confidently, and without a moment's hesitation, dashed into the road to Voladimir and Asia.

Several thousand cossacks with four pieces of cannon were retreating in that direction. The armistice ceased there. Murat, fatigued by this peace of merely half a day's duration, immediately ordered the termination of it to be announced by a discharge of carbines.

But our horsemen believed the war<sup>1</sup> to be at an end ; Moscow seemed to them the termination of it, and the advanced posts of both empires felt a repugnance to the renewal of hostilities. A new order was sent, and the same reluctance was manifested. At length Murat, highly irritated, gave the command in person, and the flames of war with which he appeared to threaten Asia, but which were destined to be subdued on the banks of the Seine, recommenced their ravages.

## CHAPTER VI.

NAPOLEON did not enter Moscow before night. He stopped at one of the first houses in the Dorogomilow suburb. It was there that he appointed marshal Mortier governor of that capital. "Above all," said he, "no pillage. Your head shall be responsible for it. Defend Moscow against friends as well as enemies."

The night was a melancholy one, unfavourable reports coming in in rapid succession. Some Frenchmen who had been resident in the country, and even an officer of the police, announced the intended burning. The officer communicated the details of the preparations for it. The emperor sought for repose in vain. He called for his attendants every moment, and made them repeat what they had heard relating to the ominous intelligence. However, he had intrenched himself, as usual, in incredulity, when, at about two o'clock, he was apprised that the flames had broken out.

It was at the merchants' palace, or exchange, in the centre of the city, and in the most opulent quarter of it. He immediately gave orders and despatched messages with great rapidity. As soon as daylight

appeared he hastened to the city himself, and severely menaced the young guard and Mortier. The marshal showed him houses covered with iron roofs; they were all closely shut up, still without any indication of violence or an attempt to break into them: yet a black smoke was already issuing from them. Napoleon entered the Kremlin thoughtful and melancholy.

At sight of this palace, at once of Gothic and modern architecture, of the Romanoffs and Rurics, of their still extant throne, of the cross of the great Ivan, and of the most beautiful part of the city of which the Kremlin commands a view, and which the flames, still confined to the bazaar, appeared inclined to respect, his first hopes revived. His ambition was gratified by this conquest. He was heard to say, "I am at length then in Moscow! in the ancient city of the Czars: in the Kremlin." He examined all the details with eager curiosity and a lofty feeling of complacency.

He ordered, however, a return to be made out of all the resources which the city contained; and in this short moment, full of animation and hope, he wrote a pacific overture to the emperor Alexander. An officer of rank belonging to the enemy had just been discovered in the great hospital, and he was charged with the delivery of the letter. Napoleon finished it, and the Russian departed with it, by the ominous light of the flames from the bazaar. The officer was to communicate news of this disaster to his sovereign, whose only answer was the fire itself.

Daylight was favourable to the exertions of the duke of Treviso, who was enabled to check the flames. The incendiaries kept themselves so well concealed that their existence was much doubted. At length severe

regulations were issued, order was re-established, and apprehension suspended ; and every one proceeded to take possession of some convenient house or sumptuous palace, expecting to find in it the full and happy accommodation which he had earned by such long and excessive privations.

Two officers had taken up their quarters in one of the buildings of the Kremlin from which they had a commanding view both of the northern and western parts of the city. About midnight they were awakened by an overpowering light. They instantly looked out and saw palaces in flames which, after exhibiting all their striking and elegant architecture in the fullest blaze, in a short period converted them into ruins. They observed that the wind, being in the north, drove the flames directly upon the Kremlin, and felt the utmost alarm for that vast enclosure of buildings where the choicest troops of the army, and their commander, were reposing. They were likewise apprehensive respecting all the adjoining houses, in which our soldiers, attendants, and horses, after all their great fatigues, and a full evening's repast, were, it could not be doubted, all sunk in profound sleep. Already the burning flakes and brands began to be driven towards the roofs of the Kremlin, when the wind suddenly changing from north to west impelled them in a different direction.

One of the officers now satisfied of the security of his own *corps d'armee*, again fell asleep, observing, " Let others look to it now ; we are safe." For such was the carelessness produced by the multiplicity of events and calamities which had almost worn down and overpowered nature, and such the selfishness arising from excessive fatigue and misery, that scarcely

any individual retained more than that portion of strength and feeling which was indispensable to his own use and preservation.

However, they were again awakened by a new and more vivid burst of light, and observed other flames rising in a totally different direction, which the changed wind was now urging towards the Kremlin; and they began to curse French carelessness and want of discipline, to which they imputed the disaster. But three times the wind changed in the same manner from north to west, and three times these persisting and avenging fires, as if furiously bent on the destruction of the imperial quarters, seemed always eager to follow the new direction.

An alarming and awful suspicion now darted on their minds. The Moscovites, aware of our rash and dangerous negligence, had probably conceived the hope of destroying our soldiers together with the city, as they lay overpowered by wine, fatigue, and sleep; or, rather perhaps, they had intended to involve in the catastrophe Napoleon himself. They had thought probably that the destruction of such a man would more than compensate for that of their capital; that the result would be of such mighty moment that the whole of Moscow might well be sacrificed to it; that, perhaps, in order to their obtaining so great a triumph it might be the will of heaven to require of them so great a sacrifice; and, finally, that such a vast funeral pile was perhaps required for such a vast Colossus.

It is difficult to say whether such intentions as these were actually formed in the minds of our enemies, but the influence of the emperor's tutelary star was requisite to prevent events from corresponding with them. In fact, not merely did the Kremlin contain,

unknown to us, a magazine of powder, but on that very same night, from the guards having either fallen asleep or been negligently posted, a whole park of artillery had been stationed under Napoleon's windows.

It was at this crisis that the raging flames were darting from all parts, and with the utmost fury against the Kremlin; for the wind which was undoubtedly attracted by such an immense fire, increased in violence every moment. If a single flake out of all that number which were flying over our heads had dropped upon either of the caissons, the flower of the army and the emperor must have been destroyed: On each of the sparks which for several hours were driven through the air depended the fate of the whole army!

At length day, a day of dismal ruin, appeared. It came to add to the horror of the scene, and to dim its splendour. Many of the officers took shelter in the halls of the palace. The chiefs, including Mortier himself, overcome by the fire with which they had contended for six and thirty hours, returned to the Kremlin, and fell down in a state of exhaustion and despair.

They were silent; and we accused ourselves of the disaster. It appeared clear to the greater number that the neglect of discipline and the intoxication of our soldiers had commenced it, and that the tempest had completed it. We regarded ourselves with something of a feeling of disgust. The exclamations of horror which would in consequence of this event resound through Europe, absolutely terrified us. We threw our eyes upon the ground in consternation at the idea of so frightful a catastrophe: it tarnished our glory;

it tore from us the fruit of it; it menaced both our present and our future existence: we were now nothing but an army of criminals, on whom heaven and the civilized world were bound to inflict deserved punishment. From this abyss of dreadful reflection, and the violence of our rage against the imagined incendiaries, we recovered only in consequence of the eager pursuit of intelligence, all of which now began to assert, and every moment more strongly to confirm the idea, that the Russians alone were chargeable with this calamity.

In fact, officers were now coming in from every quarter, who all agreed on this important point. On the first night, that between the 14th and 15th, a globe of fire had been let down upon the palace of prince Trubetskoï, and had consumed it. This was a signal. Immediately after the exchange was set on fire; some soldiers belonging to the Russian police had been seen stirring it up with lances dipped in thick pitch. In that place shells, which had been perfidiously deposited, had just burst in the stoves of a number of houses, and wounded the soldiers who were crowding around. Then, withdrawing to quarters which were still uninjured, they had fixed upon other asylums; but when nearly entering these dwellings, all of which were closed and uninhabited, they had heard issuing from them a feeble explosion; this had been followed by a light smoke, which soon became thick and black, then tinged with red, and speedily after exhibited a volume of fire, which wrapped the edifice in flames.

All the narrators had remarked men of atrocious look and tattered garments and frantic women roaming amidst the flames, and thus completing a horrid image of the infernal world. These wretched miscreants, intoxicated at once with liquor and the suc-



cess of their crimes, did not vouchsafe to conceal themselves, but ran about in triumph through the burning streets; they were often taken with flambeaux in their hands, extending the work of destruction with zeal and even fury; it became necessary in order to make them drop their torches to cut at their arms with the sabre. It was said that these banditti had been loosened from their chains by the Russian chiefs on purpose to burn Moscow, and that, in fact, so extreme a resolution could only have been formed by patriotism and executed by crime.

Orders were immediately given to try and shoot every incendiary upon the spot. The army was drawn out. The old guard, all of which had been accommodated in the Kremlin, had taken arms; baggage, and horses ready loaded, filled the several courts; we were oppressed with astonishment, grief, and despair at the idea of the destruction of so admirable a cantonment. Masters as we were of Moscow, we were about to bivouac, it seemed, without provisions, before its gates!

While our soldiers were still contending with the fire, and the army were disputing with the flames so noble a prey, Napoleon, whose sleep no one had ventured to disturb during the night, was awakened by the double light of day and conflagration. In the first impulse of his feelings he displayed great irritation, and seemed determined to master the devouring element; he soon, however, bent before the difficulty, and yielded to what was absolutely inevitable. Surprised, after striking at the heart of an empire, to find it exhibit any other sentiment than that of submission and terror, he felt himself conquered and surpassed in determination.

This mighty conquest, for which he had sacrificed

every thing, appeared now like a phantom which had been long pursued by him, which he had vainly thought he had at length grasped, but which, after all, he now saw vanishing in air, in a whirlwind of smoke and flames. He was then in a state of extreme agitation, and seemed parched by the flames by which he was surrounded. He was every moment starting from his seat, and after a few hurried steps again resuming it. He rapidly traversed his apartments, and his abrupt and vehement movements indicated the dreadful trouble of his mind: he quitted, and resumed, and again left business of the most pressing urgency to rush to his windows and trace the progress of the flames; while the following short and broken exclamations occasionally gave vent to his oppressed and labouring feelings. "What a frightful spectacle! To have done it themselves! Such a number of palaces! What extraordinary resolution! What a people! They are genuine Scythians!"

Between the fire and him there was an extensive and unoccupied piece of ground, next to which was the Mosqua with its two quays; and yet the glasses of the windows against which he leaned were violently heated, and the incessant labour of the persons employed in sweeping lighted flakes from the iron roofs of the palace was insufficient to remove all that lodged there.

At this period a report was circulated that the Kremlin was undermined. Certain Russians had stated it; certain writings attested it; some of the attendants absolutely lost their senses through terror: the military waited with firmness whatever the emperor and their destiny should decide for them; and the emperor noticed the alarm only by a smile of incredulity.

He still, however, walked about in convulsive starts, stopping at every window, and observing the raging element devouring his brilliant and boasted conquest, seizing upon all the bridges, all the accesses to the fortress which enclosed him, holding him as it were in a state of siege, making inroads every moment on some or other of the surrounding houses, reducing him perpetually within narrower bounds, and at length about to limit him actually within the walls of the Kremlin.

We began now to inhale strongly the smoke and ashes. Night was advancing to add its darkness to our dangers; and the equinoctial wind, in unison with the project of the Russians, blew with redoubled violence. The king of Naples and prince Eugene arrived at this crisis in great haste, and in company with the prince of Neufchatel instantly made their way to the emperor, whom they urged by entreaties, by gestures, and even on their knees, resolving if possible to rescue him from this place of desolation. But their efforts were in vain.

Napoleon, having possessed himself with so much difficulty, and after so many toils, of the palace of the czars, was persisting in his determination not to abandon his conquest even to the conflagration, when on a sudden the cry of "The Kremlin is on fire!" resounded from every part of the building, and forced us from the reflective stupor by which we had been absorbed. The emperor went out of his apartment to enable himself to judge of the danger. In two instances the fire had forced its way, and had been extinguished, in that part of the pile where he was accommodated; but the tower of the citadel was still burning. A police soldier had just been detected there. He was conducted before Napoleon, who ordered that he should be interrogated in his own pre-

ence. This Russian had been the actual incendiary. It was he who had given the watchword after observing the signal of his chief. Every thing, therefore, was evidently designed; and all was absolutely devoted to destruction, even the ancient and sacred pile of the Kremlin itself.

The emperor made a gesture indicative at once of contempt and vexation; and the offender was conducted into the adjoining court, where the exasperated grenadiers put an end to him with their bayonets.

## CHAPTER VII.

THIS incident had decided Napoleon. He rapidly descended the northern staircase, celebrated for the massacre of the Strelitzes, and gave orders for a guide to conduct him out of the city, a league on the Petersburg road, to the imperial castle of Petrowsky.

We were besieged, however, in the midst of an ocean of flames; they blocked up all the gates of the citadel, and repulsed the first attempts made to escape. After considerable search, however, there was discovered across the rocks a postern gate which opened towards the Mosqua. It was through this narrow pass that Napoleon and his officers and guard obtained their escape from the Kremlin. But what had they gained by this escape? Still nearer to the flames than before, they could neither go back nor stay where they were; and how was it possible to advance? How were they to cross the waves of this sea of fire? Even those who had passed through and examined the city, now bewildered by the wind and blinded by the

ashes, were totally unable distinctly to recognise its several parts, as the streets had disappeared amidst the smoke and ruins.

It was requisite, however, to lose no time. The roaring of the flames now increased every moment around us. A single narrow street, crooked, and in every part on fire, presented itself to our notice, but seemed rather an avenue to the hell before us than a way to escape from it. The emperor dashed on foot, and without a moment's hesitation, into this formidable pass. He advanced over the scorching cinders which grated under his feet, amidst the dangers of dividing roofs, and falling beams, and domes covered with burning iron, all scattering tremendous ruins around him. These ruins greatly impeded his progress. The flames which were consuming with eager and tempestuous violence the houses between which he proceeded, after reaching their summits were turned back by the force of the wind in arches of fire over our heads. We were walking on a soil of fire, under a sky of fire, and between walls of fire. A penetrating heat was tormenting and almost destroying our eyes, which yet it was necessary to keep open and intently fixed upon the occurring dangers. A devouring air, sparkling ashes, detached flakes, made our respiration short, dry, and gasping, and already nearly suffocated with smoke. Our hands were scorched by endeavouring to guard our faces from the intolerable heat, and by driving off the fiery particles which were every instant lodging upon, and burning through our garments.

In this crisis of inexpressible distress, and when rapidly pushing forwards appeared to be our only chance for escape, our guide stopped in complete suspense and perturbation. And if some pillaging strag-

glers, belonging to the first corps, had not recognised the emperor through the hurricane of flames, here probably would soon have terminated our life of adventure. They instantly ran to his aid, and conducted him to the still smoking ruins of a quarter of the city which had been reduced to ashes in the morning.

It was just at this time that we fell in with the prince of Eckmuhl. This marshal, who had been wounded at the Mosqua, had actually ordered his men to carry him through the flames in order to extricate Napoleon, or perish with him. He threw himself into his arms in a transport of joy. The emperor received him well, but with a tranquillity which in the midst of danger never deserted him.

In order to complete his escape from this boundless region of calamities, it was yet necessary to get before a long convoy of gunpowder which was defiling amidst the fire. This was not the least of his dangers; but it was however his last, and at night they reached Petrowski.

On the following morning, the 17th of September, Napoleon directed his first glances towards Moscow, hoping to find the fire subdued; but he perceived it continuing with all its violence. The whole city seemed to him one vast "fire-spout," ascending in awful whirls towards the sky, which strongly reflected its terrific glare. He was long absorbed in the contemplation of this scene of horror and ruin, and at length broke his melancholy and painful silence only by observing, "This forebodes us no common calamities!"

The effort which he had recently made to reach Moscow had exhausted all his means of hostility. Moscow had been the end of his projects, the object of all his hopes, and Moscow had now disappeared.

What line of conduct was he now to adopt! There, above all, was his prompt and decisive genius compelled to hesitate. We saw him in 1805 order the sudden and total abandonment of an expedition prepared at immense expense, and, at Boulogne-sur-mer, decide on surprising and annihilating the Austrian army, and trace out all the marches of the campaign, from Ulm to Munich precisely as they were afterwards executed; we saw him, in the following year, dictate from Paris with the same infallibility every movement of his army towards Berlin, the day of his actual and triumphant entrance into that capital, and the appointment of the governor whom he destined for it. We now saw the same man confounded, perplexed, and fluctuating in his turn. He had never before communicated even the most daring of his projects to his most confidential ministers otherwise than by his orders for their execution; and now we beheld him compelled to consult, and avail himself of, the moral as well as physical strength of those about him.

The same forms, however, were still observed. He declared, therefore, that he was going to march upon Petersburg. That conquest was already traced out upon his maps hitherto so unfailingly prophetic; and the different corps had received orders to be in readiness. His decision, however, existed only in appearance, and amounted to nothing more than displaying a firm countenance and demeanour in the unfavourable position of affairs, or an attempt to divert his mind from the contemplation of his loss of Moscow. Accordingly, Berthier, and more particularly Bessieres, had soon convinced him that the season, supplies, and roads would all fail him in so arduous an attempt.

Just at that moment he was informed that Kutusof, after having fled in an easterly direction, had turned

suddenly to the south, and thrown himself between Moscow and Kalouga. This was an additional reason against the expedition to Petersburg. There was a threefold motive to march against the already defeated army and complete its destruction. By doing this, he would preserve his right flank and line of operation; would gain possession of Kalouga and Toula, the granary and arsenal of Russia; and, finally, would open a safe, short, and yet untouched line of retreat to Smolensk and Lithuania.

Some one proposed his returning and marching upon Wittgenstein and Witepsk. Napoleon hesitated between these several schemes. That of the conquest of Petersburg was the only one which pleased and flattered him. The others he considered only as modes of retreat, as acknowledgments of error; and whether from pride, or from the policy which prevents a man from ever admitting himself to be mistaken, he rejected them.

Besides, at what point could he stop in a retreat? He had so fully depended on obtaining peace at Moscow, that no winter-quarters had been prepared for him in Lithuania. Kalouga presented him with no temptations. Why should he ravage provinces which yet remained untouched? It would be more politic merely to menace them, and leave the Russians something to lose, in order to induce them to a peace by which it might be preserved. Was it possible for him to march to another battle, to advance to new conquests, without uncovering a line of operation thickly strewn with sick, and stragglers, and wounded, and every description of convoys? Moscow had been announced as the general rallying point, and how was it possible to change it? What other name would have any attraction?



Finally, and above all, how could he abandon a hope to which he had made so many sacrifices, when he understood that his letter to Alexander had just passed the Russian advanced posts ; when in the course of eight days he might expect to receive the so much desired answer ; when that interval was required, to rally and recruit his army, to collect the remains of Moscow, the burning of which would but too well justify its pillage, and to enable him to tear away his soldiers from such a feast of plunder.

Yet scarcely a third of that army or that capital was still in existence. But himself and the Kremlin still remained. His renown was still unimpaired ; and he was persuaded that the two great names of Napoleon and Moscow united would be sufficient to effect every thing. He decided, therefore, to return to the Kremlin, which a battalion of his guard had unfortunately preserved.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE camps which he passed over, to arrive at that place, presented a very singular appearance. They were situated in the midst of fields, in a thick and cold mire, and contained immense fires fed by rich furniture of mahogany, and gilded sashes and doors. Around these fires, on a litter of damp straw, sheltered only by a few miserable planks, his soldiers, with their officers, were seen splashed with dirt and black with smoke, seated upon superb arm-chairs, or reclining on sofas covered with silk. At their feet, carelessly opened or thrown in heaps, lay Cachemire shawls, the finest furs of Siberia, the gold stuffs of Persia, and plates of solid

silver from which they had nothing to eat but a black dough baked in the ashes, and half-broiled and bloody steaks of horseflesh. A singular union of abundance and scarcity, of opulence and squalidness, of luxury and misery!

Between the camps and the city were met numerous parties of soldiers dragging with them their plunder, or driving before them, like so many beasts of burden, a number of the inhabitants bending under the weight of the pillage of their capital. For the fire had brought out nearly twenty thousand persons who had before remained in that immense city unobserved. Some of these Moscovites, both men and women, appeared well-clothed. They were of the trading class. They came to take refuge, with the wreck of their property before our fires. There they lived carelessly intermingled with our troops, protected by some of them, and suffered, or indeed scarcely noticed, by the rest.

The same was the case with about ten thousand of the enemy's soldiers. For many days they wandered about in the midst of us, at perfect freedom, and some of them even retaining their arms. Our soldiers met their now conquered enemies without any feelings of animosity, and without even thinking of making them prisoners, either from their conceiving the war to be at an end, or from thoughtlessness, or pity, and because a Frenchman is desirous of having no enemies but in the field of battle. They suffered them to partake of the comforts of their fires; and, even more, they permitted them to be their associates in plunder. When, however, the marauding began to abate in violence, or rather when the chiefs had organised it into a regular foraging, then the great number of these Russian stragglers was more noticed. Orders were then given to seize and detain them; but between seven

and eight thousand had by that time made their escape ; and not long after we found them opposed to us in the field of battle.

On entering Moscow the emperor was struck with a spectacle more impressive still. In that recently great and extensive city he found only a few scattered houses standing in the midst of general desolation. The stench proceeding from this prostrate, burnt, and calcined colossus, was highly offensive. Heaps of ashes, and, at intervals, fragments of walls still standing, or broken pillars, alone pointed out the course of the streets.

The suburbs were interspersed both with men and women whose clothes had been nearly destroyed by fire. They wandered about like spectres amidst the ruins. Some had crept into gardens and were scraping the ground to tear from it whatever pulse or roots they could discover ; others were contending with birds of prey for the remnants of some carcase which the army had abandoned. Farther on, others again were seen rushing into the Mosqua to recover some of the corn which Rostopchin had ordered to be thrown into that river, and which they eagerly devoured without any culinary preparation, although it had become sour and unfit for use.

In the mean time, the sight of plunder in such of the camps as were still in want of every thing had stimulated the desires even of those soldiers whom their sense of duty, or the greater strictness of their officers, had hitherto kept steady to their colours. They murmuringly inquired, " Why should they be detained ? Why were they suffered to perish miserably by hunger, when every thing was within their reach. Should any thing be left to those hostile and fatal flames that could be rescued from them ? Whence

could arise such respect for conflagration?" They added, "that, as the inhabitants of Moscow had not merely abandoned it, but had endeavoured also completely to destroy it, every thing that could be extricated from it would be fairly acquired; that the remains of that city were to be considered in the same light as the remains of the weapons of the conquered, which were universally considered as belonging to the conqueror; for the Moscovites had converted their capital into a vast machine or weapon of war for our destruction."

This was the language of the most honourable and best disciplined among them; and nothing could well be said in reply. A fastidious scruple had prevented in the first instance the ordering and arranging a system of pillage, but it was in a short time permitted without any regulation at all. Then, urged by the most imperious wants, all rushed forward to plunder, not only the most select of the privates, but even officers themselves. The chiefs were compelled to shut their eyes to it. None of the troops remained with the eagles and regimental *insignia*, but those absolutely necessary to guard them.

The emperor saw his whole army dispersed over the city. His progress was impeded by a long file of marauders going to, or returning from, the scene of plunder, by tumultuous collections of soldiers grouped round the steps leading to cellars, and the doors of the palaces, shops, and churches which the fire had nearly reached, and into which they were endeavouring to break their way.

His advance was checked by the wrecks of the furniture which had been thrown from the windows to preserve it from the fire; in short, by numberless attractive objects of plunder which, however, caprice

had led to the abandonment of for the sake of others : for, agreeably to the usual thoughtlessness of soldiers, they were incessantly beginning their fortune anew, at first accumulating every thing without distinction, loading themselves beyond all bounds, as if they could have carried all away with them, and then, after going only a few steps farther, compelled from fatigue to throw away the greater part of their load.

The roads were obstructed by them. The squares, like the camps, were become market-places, where all resorted to exchange superfluities for necessities. There the most rare and costly works of art, the value of which was utterly unknown and unimagined by the possessors, were sold for the merest trifle, while other articles infinitely more showy than valuable procured an enormous price. Gold, on account of its being so much more portable, was purchased at an immense loss with silver, which their havre-sacks could not contain. Everywhere around soldiers were seen seated on bales of merchandise, on heaps of sugar and coffee, and in the midst of the most exquisite wines and liqueurs, which they were eager to exchange for a loaf of bread. Many in consequence of intoxication, the progress of which was aided by inanition, fell down senseless near the flames, which soon reached and destroyed them.

Notwithstanding these circumstances, the greater part of the houses and palaces which had escaped the fire were appropriated to the accommodation of the chiefs, and all that they contained was respected. Every one beheld with grief this great destruction, and also the pillage which became the necessary consequence of it. Some of our select men were accused of being too much occupied and too much pleased with collecting whatever they

could save from the flames. They were, however, so few that they could be distinctly enumerated. War in men of their ardent minds was a passion which implied the existence of others. They did not act thus from cupidity, for they did not accumulate; they used or disposed of what they seized upon, taking indeed principally for the sake of giving, lavishing every thing around them, and conceiving that they had amply paid for the whole by the danger they had incurred in acquiring it.

In such peculiar circumstances, no distinction can be drawn but in the motive. Some plundered with regret, others with delight, and all through necessity. In the midst of opulence which no longer was the property of any, which was on the point of being destroyed by the flames, or lost in the ruins, men were placed in a situation perfectly new, where good and ill were confounded together, and to which ordinary rules had no application. The most scrupulous in their feelings, if they had the means, and those also who were the most wealthy, purchased of the soldiers the provisions and clothes which they wanted; others employed substitutes to go and maraud for them; the most necessitous were obliged to purvey for themselves with their own hands.

With respect to the soldiers, many of them, embarrassed with the produce of their pillage, were become less attentive to duty, and had less of their former happy carelessness of difficulty and of life: in danger they entered into calculation, and, in order to save their spoil, they did what they would have disdained doing to save themselves.

It was through the midst of this mighty subversion that Napoleon re-entered Moscow. He had abandoned it to pillage, in hopes that his army, dispersed

over its ruins, would search them to considerable advantage. But when he understood that excesses were increasing, that the old guard itself had been hurried into them, that the Russian peasants, at length induced to bring in supplies, which he had given orders to pay for at liberal prices to induce others to follow their example, had been actually plundered by our famished soldiers of the provisions which they brought us; when he became apprized that the different corps were contending with every want, and prepared to dispute, ready to proceed to violence for the remains of Moscow; that in short the resources still existing would soon be totally destroyed by the irregularities of pillage; then he issued severe orders, and commanded his guard to keep close in their quarters. The churches in which our cavalry had been sheltered were restored for the service of the Greek church. Marauding for supplies was ordered to take place among the corps by rotation like every other service; and an effort was at last made to collect and secure the Russian stragglers.

But it was now too late. The stragglers had now fled. The terrified peasants returned with supplies no more. A great quantity of provisions had been wasted. Even the French army was occasionally chargeable with this fault; but in the present instance the fire furnished some excuse; it was necessary to act in haste in order to get beyond the flames, and much confusion and loss were in consequence inevitable. It is, however, not a little remarkable that, at the first word of command, every thing was restored to order.

Some authors, and even some French ones, have ransacked the rubbish and ruins of Moscow in order to discover traces of any excesses which might be committed there. But in fact there were only a few. The

greater part of our troops acted generously towards the small number of inhabitants and the great number of enemies with whom they met there. But that some excesses should have accompanied the first rush for pillage by an army labouring under such serious privations, suffering under such hardships, and composed of such various nations, however deeply to be regretted, can surely never be considered as matter of astonishment.

Afterwards, according to invariable custom, when misfortune had assailed and crushed these warriors, then reproaches were thickly poured upon their heads. Alas! every one surely knows that such excesses have ever constituted the disgusting part of war, the spots upon the orb of its glory; that the renown of conquerors like every other object is followed by its shadow! There exists no being however minute which the sun, notwithstanding its splendour and immensity, can illuminate on every side at once! and it is an inevitable law of nature that great bodies should have shadows corresponding to their magnitude.

Indeed the virtues, as well as the vices, of this army, have excited too much surprise and astonishment. They were the virtues of the crisis, the vices of the occasion; and on these accounts the former were the less commendable and the latter less censurable, as they were, if we may use the expression, commanded by example and circumstances. Thus every thing is in fact relative; which observation by no means precludes fixed principles of morality, or pure utility and unmixed good from being considered as the proper object and aim of human conduct. But the question here is, simply what judgment is to be formed of this army and its chief; a judgment which can never be correctly formed by any who do not put themselves in



their place ; but as that position was one of great elevation, great singularity, and great complication, very few minds are competent to embrace it in one grand and comprehensive view, and duly to estimate all its necessary results.

## CHAPTER IX.

IN the mean time Kutusof, on abandoning Moscow, had drawn Murat after him towards Kolomna, to the spot where the Mosqua divides the road to it. At that point, under favour of the night, he turned suddenly towards the south, in order to place himself, by way of Podol, between Moscow and Kalouga. This nocturnal march of the Russians about Moscow, from which a violent wind was conveying towards them its ashes, carried with it something of a solemn and religious character. They advanced by the ominous light of a conflagration which was devouring the emporium of their commerce, the sanctuary of their religion, and the cradle of their empire ! Under the influence of horror and indignation, they all observed a melancholy silence, broken only by the dull and monotonous sound of their own footsteps, the crashes occasioned by the flames, and the howlings of the tempest. Frequently the mournful light from the fire was interrupted by bursts and flashes of livid glare, which exhibited the symptoms of uncontrollable grief that marked the contracted countenances of these warriors. The fire of their dark and threatening looks, corresponded with that which they considered to have been entirely the work of our hands, and already disclosed the ferocious vengeance which was fermenting in their

hearts; a vengeance which diffused itself throughout the empire, and to which innumerable Frenchmen became victims.

At this solemn crisis, Kutusof, in a noble and manly style, announced the destruction of Moscow to his sovereign. He informed him "that in order to preserve the fertile provinces of the south, and his communication with Tormasof and Tchitchakof, he had just been compelled to abandon Moscow, previously, however, evacuated by the population which had constituted the life of it; he considered that the people were in fact the soul of an empire, and that wherever the Russian people were, there were Moscow and the whole Russian empire."

Then, however, he seemed to bend under the weight of his grief. He admitted, "that the wound would be deep and ineffaceable;" but speedily recovering from his dejection, he observed, "That the loss of Moscow made only one city less in an empire, and was the sacrifice of a part for the safety of the whole. He was now pressing upon the flank of the long line of operation of the enemy, keeping him in a state of blockade by his detachments; there he should occupy himself in watching his movements, in protecting the resources of the empire, and in recruiting his army." At this early period (the 16th of September), he predicted "that Napoleon would be compelled to abandon his fatal conquest."

It is said that this intelligence overwhelmed Alexander with consternation. Napoleon entertained hopes in the feebleness of his rival, while the Russians were equally apprehensive of it. The czar disappointed both these hopes and fears. In the language which he held on the occasion he appeared as great as the misfortune which had befallen him. He issued

an address to his people. "Let there," said he, "be no pusillanimous despondence; we solemnly swear to show redoubled energy and perseverance. The enemy is in deserted Moscow as in a tomb, without the means of domination or even of existence. After entering Russia with three hundred thousand men, of all countries, without any common sympathy, united by no bond whether of nation or religion, half of them have been lost by the sword, famine and desertion. Moscow contains only the ruins of them. The enemy has reached the centre of Russia, without subjugating a single Russian."

"Our forces in the mean time are increasing, and are surrounding him. He is in the midst of a powerful population, and encompassed by armies which keep him in check, and await him as their prey. He will soon be under the necessity of attempting flight through the close ranks of our intrepid soldiers, in order to escape from famine. Shall we then, while all Europe is observing us with interest and admiration, abandon our cause! Let us furnish it, rather, with a brilliant example, and gratefully kiss the hand which has selected us to become the first of nations in the cause of liberty and virtue." He closed his address with an invocation to the Almighty.

The Russians are divided in their opinions both respecting their general and their emperor. We, who are their enemies, can judge of our enemies only from facts. Such, however, as we have stated, was their language, and their actions fully corresponded with it. Let us, my comrades, do them strict justice. Their sacrifice was complete, unreserved, unattended by dilatory hesitation or pusillanimous regret. Since they made it they have urged no claims of indemnity, although even in the capital of their enemy, which they preserved

uninjured. The renown which such conduct merited they have obtained, and enjoy in all its solidity and purity. They knew the nature of true glory; and when civilization has made further progress among them, this great people will exhibit also its splendid era, and in its turn wield that sceptre of glory which the various nations of the earth seem destined to abandon to each other in succession.

The winding march which Kutusof performed, either through indecision or through stratagem, was highly advantageous to him. Murat lost all traces of him for the space of three days, of which the Russian availed himself, to study his ground and strongly intrench himself in it. His advanced guard had nearly arrived at Woronowo, one of the finest properties of count Rostopchin, when that governor advanced before them. The Russians thought that he was merely desirous of taking a final view of his delightful home, when suddenly they perceived the edifice disappear in thick clouds of smoke.

They eagerly pressed forward to extinguish the fire, but, to their utter astonishment, were repulsed by Rostopchin himself. They perceived him in the midst of the flames actively stirring up and promoting their fury, surveying the rapid destruction of his superb mansion with complacency and even smiles, and then with an untrembling hand, tracing the following words which the French, nearly shuddering with astonishment, read on the iron gate of a church which they found still standing. "I have been employed eight years in embellishing this residence, and have lived in it happily in the bosom of my family: the inhabitants of this estate, amounting to seventeen hundred and twenty, have quitted it in consequence of your approach; and I have with my own hands set fire to

my own house, to prevent its being polluted by your presence. I have abandoned to you, Frenchmen, my two houses at Moscow, which contained furniture and valuables to the amount of half a million of rubles, but here be assured you shall find nothing but ashes."

It was near this spot that Murat came up with Kutusof. On the 29th of September they had a smart engagement of cavalry near Czerikowo; and another on the 4th of October near Winkowo. But on the latter occasion, Miloradowitch finding himself very closely pressed, wheeled round in exasperation, and furiously charged Sebastiani with a body of twelve thousand horse. He placed that general in such imminent danger that Murat, in the heat of the action, dictated an application for a suspension of arms, announcing to Kutusof the mission of a flag of truce. Lauriston was the negotiator intended. But, as the arrival of Poniatowski just at this crisis turned the balance in our favour, the king made no use of the letter which Borelli had just written: he fought on to the close of the day, and repulsed Miloradowitch.

In the mean time the conflagration of Moscow, which had begun on the night between the 14th and 15th of September, and been suspended in consequence of our exertions on the day of the 15th, which had been renewed with greater violence in the course of the succeeding night, and reigned in all its fury during the 16th, 17th, and 18th, on the 19th began to abate, and ceased on the 20th. On the latter day Napoleon, whom the fire had driven from the Kremlin, re-entered the palace of the Czars. To that spot he attracted the eyes of all Europe. He there awaited his carriages, his reinforcements, and his stragglers, confident that all his troops would be rallied by his victory, by the lure of such valuable plunder, by the

astonishing spectacle of Moscow captured, and, above all, by himself, whose glory from the height of this immense ruin, still shone far and wide around, and commanded attention like a watch-tower upon a rock.

On two occasions, however, on the 22nd and 28th of September, the arrival of urgent letters from Murat had nearly torn Napoleon away from this fatal abode. They announced a battle; but in both instances the orders of march, which had been actually written, were burnt. It seemed as if, on the part of our emperor, the war was at an end, and that he looked forward now to nothing but an answer from Petersburg. He fed his hope with the recollections of Tilsit and Erfurt. Would his ascendancy over Alexander be less at Moscow? And then, like most who have experienced a long career of success, what he fondly desired, he ardently hoped.

Moreover, his mind possessed that very superior faculty which consists in suspending, at pleasure, the most intense application to any one particular subject, however interesting and momentous, either for the sake merely of a change, or with a view to relief and rest. In him the will was stronger than the imagination, and in this important respect he reigned over himself as well as others.

Accordingly, Paris drew off his thoughts from Petersburg. The accumulated affairs which now required his attention, and the couriers who arrived during the first days of his residence in rapid succession, greatly assisted in enabling him to bear his suspense. But the promptitude and despatch with which he transacted business had soon exhausted it; and the messengers, who at first arrived from France in the course of fifteen days, were soon intercepted. A few military posts in four cities which had been reduced

to ashes, and in wooden houses, weakly palisaded, were found insufficient to protect a route of ninety-three leagues. For on a communication of such great extent it had not been possible to establish more than a comparatively small number of stations, and those at far too distant intervals. A line of operation thus extended was broken wherever the enemy came into contact with it ; a party of peasants mixed up with a few cossacks were sufficient to interrupt it.

In the mean time Alexander's answer had not arrived. The uneasiness of Napoleon increased, and the means of diverting it diminished. The activity of his mind, accustomed to the superintendence of the whole of Europe, had now no other aliment than the administration of a hundred thousand men ; and, indeed, so perfect was the organization of his army, that it was scarcely a matter of business to him. Every thing relating to it was arranged and methodized. All the threads of the system were in his own hands. He was surrounded by ministers who could inform him instantly, and at any hour of the day of the position of every individual in it, whether in the morning or evening, whether alone or not, whether he was with the regiment, at the hospital, on furlough, or however otherwise disposed of ; and this with accuracy all the way from Moscow to Paris. So admirably had the science of a concentrated administration been at that period matured ; so well practised and selected were the agents employed ; and so precise and exacting was the chief.

Already, however, eleven days had passed away, and the silence of Alexander was still unbroken ! and Napoleon constantly persisted in hoping that he should surpass his rival in obstinacy ; thus losing time which it was of such consequence for to him to gain, and

which is always of the utmost value to defence against attack

At that period, even more than at Witepsk, all his proceedings apparently indicated to the Russians that their formidable enemy intended to establish himself in the heart of their empire. Moscow, although reduced to ashes, received an intendant, and municipalities. Orders were issued to lay in a stock of provisions there for the winter. A theatre was formed in the midst of the ruins. The principal actors of Paris were said to have been summoned to perform in it. An Italian singer arrived to attempt to renew, at the Kremlin, the evening entertainments of the Thuilleries. By these indications Napoleon attempted to mislead a government which, by the long habitude of ruling a nation involved in gross error and ignorance, was more than his equal in every species of deception.

He perceived himself the insufficiency of these means ; and yet September was past ! October had commenced ! Alexander had not deigned to answer him ! It was a decided affront ! He felt hurt and irritated. On the 3rd of October, after a night of restlessness and resentment, he sent for his marshals. As soon as he saw them, he said, " Come in, and hear the new plan which I have just formed. Prince Eugene do you read it. (They all accordingly listened with the greatest attention.) They must burn what yet remained of Moscow, and march by way of Twer upon Petersburg, where Macdonald will come to join them ! Murat and Davoust shall form the rear-guard." And the emperor, with great animation, fixed his sparkling eyes upon his generals, whose grave countenances and unbroken silence expressed nothing but astonishment.

Then, raising his tone and endeavouring to increase



his own animation that he might effectually animate others, "What!" said he, "are you the men not to kindle at this project? Was a grander military exploit ever performed? This conquest, now, is the only one worthy of us. What glory it will confer upon us; and how great will be the wonder and admiration of the world when it learns that, within three months, we conquered the two great capitals of the north."

But Davoust, as well as Daru, objected to him "the season of the year, the scarcity of provisions, a barren, desolate and artificial road all the way from Twer to Petersburg, which was carried over a hundred leagues of marshy ground, and which in a single day, three hundred peasants might render absolutely impracticable. Why would he plunge deeper and deeper into the north, thus actually anticipating, provoking, and defying the deadly power of winter? They were already but too near that enemy! And what was to become of the six thousand wounded still at Moscow? These unfortunate men, then, were to be delivered up to Kutusof. That general, moreover, would press closely on the army in its march, and harass it without intermission! It would be necessary for it to attack and defend at the same moment, they should be marching to a conquest like men who fled from battle!"

These chiefs have declared that they then themselves proposed several plans; a very unnecessary and useless labour with respect to a prince whose genius anticipated the conceptions of every other man, and with whom, if he had really been determined to march to Petersburg, their objecting would have availed nothing. But the plan was, in fact, a sally of his anger, a suggestion of chagrin and despair at finding himself compelled in the face of Europe to give up his point, abandon his conquest, and retreat.

It was, moreover, a menace held out to terrify his own adherents as well as the enemy, and in order to bring about and forward a negotiation through the agency of Caulaincourt. That state-officer had rendered himself agreeable to Alexander. He was the only one among all the distinguished men of Napoleon's court who had obtained any ascendancy over the mind of his rival; during several months, however, Napoleon had kept him at a distance, in consequence of his expressed and repeated disapprobation of the Russian expedition.

It was to this very individual himself, however, that he was on this occasion compelled to have recourse, and to disclose his anxiety. He sent for him accordingly, but when he found himself alone with him he hesitated. He walked forward and backward for a considerable time with hurried steps, in great agitation, holding Caulaincourt all the while by the arm, before his pride could be prevailed upon to break so painful a silence. At last it began to give way, but in a tone of something like menace. He was desirous, while in fact soliciting peace, to have the appearance of being sued to for it, and the air of one who condescended to grant it.

After a few indistinct and half-articulated words, "He was going," he said, "to march to Petersburg. He was well aware that the destruction of that city would give great pain to his grand-equerrie. Russia would in consequence of that event rise in insurrection against the emperor Alexander, a conspiracy would be formed against that monarch, and he would be assassinated. That certainly would be a great calamity. He esteemed that prince, and should regret his fate both on his own account and on account of France. His character, he added, was well adapted to our in

terests; no other could be substituted for him equally to our advantage. In order to prevent such a catastrophe, he had thoughts of sending Caulaincourt on an embassy to him."

But the duke of Vicenza, more inclined to obstinacy than flattery, held the same opinions and language as before. He maintained that this overture would be useless; that until the soil of Russia was entirely evacuated, Alexander would listen to no proposition whatever; that Russia was fully aware of all the advantage she derived from the approaching season of the year; and that the step proposed would in reality do harm instead of good, as it would show the need Napoleon had of peace, and disclose the complete embarrassment of our position.

He added, "that the more remarkable the choice of the negotiator might be, the more eagerness and anxiety it would discover: that he in particular should be certain to fail in such a mission, and so much the more certain as he should enter upon it in the full confidence of that result." At these words the emperor hastily put an end to the conversation by saying, "Well then, I will send Lauriston."

Lauriston says, "that he added some new objections to the preceding, and that being somewhat piqued by the emperor he proposed to him the advice to begin his retreat on that very day in the direction of Kalouga." Napoleon replied with some bitterness, "that he liked plans that were simple, routes the least indirect, high-roads, that for an example which had brought him to Moscow, but which he was determined not to tread back till he had secured peace." Then, showing to him, as he had done to the duke of Vicenza, the letter which he had just written to Alexander, he ordered him to go and get a safe-conduct from Kutusof

for Petersburg. The last words of the emperor to Lauriston were, "I want peace; I must have peace; I will have peace, at the expense of every thing but honour."

## CHAPTER X.

**THAT** general departed, and arrived at the advanced posts on the 15th of October. The war was immediately suspended, and the interview granted; but Wolkonsky, Alexander's aide-de-camp, and Beningsen were there without Kutusof. Wilson asserts, that the Russian generals and officers, suspecting their commander, and charging him with imbecility, had loudly imputed in some quarter treason, and that Kutusof had not dared to quit his camp.

Lauriston's instructions were to address himself solely to Kutusof. He therefore loftily rejected all intermediate communication, and availing himself, as he has since stated, of this occasion to break off a negotiation which he disapproved, he withdrew, in opposition to great urgency for his stay on the part of Wolkonsky, and determined to return to Moscow. Had he really done so, Napoleon, under the influence of irritation, would undoubtedly have precipitated himself upon Kutusof, have overthrown and destroyed his unrecruited army, and absolutely wrested from him the peace he so much wanted. Or even had the event been less decisive, he would, at least, have been able to fall back without any disaster upon his reinforcements.

Unfortunately Beningsen lost no time in demanding an interview with Murat. Lauriston waited the result of it. The chief of the Russian staff, more skilful in

diplomacy than in war, exerted himself to captivate the new-made monarch by the most deferential forms of address, to seduce him by compliment and eulogy, and delude him by the soft and honied language of humanity and kindness, breathing a weariness and absolute sickness of war, and the most ardent desires of peace : and Murat now tired of battles, dissatisfied at the result of them, and regretting, as some say, his distant throne, as he had now no expectation of a better one, easily yielded to this captivation, seduction, and delusion.

Beningsen had at the same time succeeded with his own chief and that of our advanced guard ; he then sent persons in eager search of Lauriston, ordering that he should be conducted into the camp of the Russians, where Kutusof would be ready to meet him at midnight. The interview began unfavourably. Kownitzin and Wolkonsky were desirous of remaining as witnesses. This offended the French general, who required that they should withdraw ; and they immediately did so.

As soon as Lauriston was left alone with Kutusof, he explained to him his motives and object, and requested of him a passport to Petersburg. The Russian general replied, " that it exceeded his powers to grant that request ; but he immediately proposed to charge Wolkonsky with Napoleon's letter to Alexander, and offered to agree to an armistice till the aide-de-camp's return. He accompanied these proposals with protestations of the most pacific character, in which he was followed by all his generals.

According to them, " all were groaning under this incessant warfare : and for what end or object was it carried on ? The two nations, like their emperors, should naturally esteem and be attached to one ano-

ther, and become at once friends and allies. They entertained the most ardent hopes that a peace would speedily arrive from Petersburg. Wolkonsky could not travel too fast." And all of them crowded eagerly around Lauriston, taking him aside, shaking him by the hand, and lavishing upon him all those caressing attentions which they derive from Asiatic manners.

But it soon became decidedly evident that, whatever differences might exist, among them, they were at least acting in concert to deceive Murat and his emperor; and in this they succeeded. These details transported Napoleon with joy. Credulous through hope, perhaps even through despair, he was for a few instants apparently intoxicated with delight at this aspect of affairs; and, eager to escape from the internal pressure that weighed upon his feelings, he seemed desirous to shake off the burden by giving full indulgence to the animation of his joy. He summoned all his generals to attend him, and, with an air of triumph, "announced to them the approach of peace! They had only to wait a fortnight for it! He alone had been acquainted with the Russian character! On the receipt of his letter all Petersburg would be lighted up with bonfires."

The armistice, however, proposed by Kutusof did not please him; and he ordered Murat to break it immediately: but notwithstanding this order, it was still observed, and the cause of its being so is unknown.

This armistice was a somewhat singular one. A notice of only three hours was sufficient on either side for terminating it. It extended only to the front of the two armies, not including the flanks. At least, such was the interpretation which the Russians put upon it. A convoy could not be brought in by us, or a foraging effected, without hostilities; so that the

war, in fact, continued in every part but where it might operate to our advantage.

During the immediately succeeding days, Murat gratified himself by appearing at the advanced posts of the enemy. He there enjoyed the admiration which his noble mien, his reputation for bravery, and his royal rank naturally drew upon him. The Russian chiefs were on their guard to avoid giving him the slightest offence, and were profuse of every flattering attention and deference in order to foster this delusion. He was at liberty to give orders to their *védettes* as much as to the French. If any part of the ground which they occupied suited his convenience, they were eager to accommodate him with it.

The Cossack chiefs went so far as to pretend enthusiastic attachment and loyalty, and to say that the only emperor they acknowledged was the one who reigned at Moscow. Murat, for a short time, actually believed that they would no more fight against him. He even proceeded farther: Napoleon, on reading his letters, was heard to exclaim, "Murat, king of the Cossacks! how ridiculous." But the wildest conceits sometimes start up in the minds of men, who have passed through a long series of successful adventure.

With respect to the emperor, who was not so easily deceived, he experienced only a short period of stimulated and factitious enjoyment. He soon began to complain of the irritating Guerilla war that hovered constantly around him; that in the midst of all these pacific demonstrations, he well knew that bands of Cossacks were constantly roaming, both on his flanks and rear. Had not a hundred and fifty dragoons of his old guard been surprised and defeated, and their commander taken prisoner by these bands? And this had occurred two days after the armistice, on

the Mojaïsk road, upon the line of operation, that by which the army communicated with its magazines, reinforcements, and depôts, and himself with Europe !”

In fact, upon that road two considerable convoys had just fallen into the power of the enemy ; one through the negligence of its commander, who killed himself in despair ; the other through the cowardice of an officer, who was about to receive his punishment at the moment when the retreat commenced. The destruction of the army was his salvation.

Our soldiers, and especially our horsemen, were obliged every morning to go to a considerable distance in order to obtain provisions for the evening and the following day. And, in proportion as the environs of Moscow and Winkowo became more and more drained, the distance inevitably increased from day to day. Both men and horses returned in a state of exhaustion ; such at least as returned at all : for every bushel of corn, and every truss of hay were strongly contested with us. We could carry back only what we had wrested from the enemy's hands. The surprises, skirmishes, and losses were incessant. The peasants mixed up in these encounters. They punished with death those among their number, whom the thirst of gain had induced to bring provisions to our camps. Others set fire to their villages, in order to drive away our foragers and deliver them into the power of the Cossacks, whom they had previously summoned to the spot, and who were holding us in it in a state of siege.

They were peasants also who captured Vereia, a town in the neighbourhood of Moscow. One of their priests, it is said, conceived the idea of this *coup-de-main*, and actually executed it. He armed the inha-



bitants, obtained a few troops from Kutusof, and on the 10th of October, before day, he ordered the signal to be given for a false attack on one side, while on the other he rushed against our palisades, broke them completely down, and rapidly making his way into the town put the whole garrison to the sword.

Thus was the war continued in every point, in front, in flank, and in rear. The army was much weakened; the enemy was becoming every day more confident and enterprising. It seemed likely to be the case with this conquest, as with so many others, to be gained in mass and lost in detail.

Murat himself began at last to feel uneasy. He had seen in these affairs of every day's occurrence half of the cavalry that had remained to him melted away. At the advanced posts, or at casual meetings between our officers, and those of the Russian army, the latter, whether from being tired of warfare, from vanity, or from military frankness carried to indiscretion, dwelt much upon the calamities which threatened us. They pointed to "those horses, still wild-looking, and scarcely broken in, and whose long hair swept the dust of the plain. Did not that sufficiently prove to us that a numerous cavalry was reaching them from every quarter around, while ours was rapidly hastening to total ruin? And did not the continual discharge of fire-arms in the interior of their line announce to us, that vast numbers of recruits were exercising there under favour of the armistice?"

"And, in fact, notwithstanding the length of country which they had to pass, all these men joined the army. There was no necessity, as in former years, to wait for calling them out to their duty till heavy snows obstructing all the roads, except the main route, rendered their desertion absolutely impossible. None failed to

obey the national summons. The whole of Russia was rising in a mass ; mothers, it was said, on finding that their sons had been enlisted, actually wept for joy ; they ran to announce to them the glorious intelligence, and conducted them themselves to the place where they might see them receive the sign of the Crusaders, and hear them exclaim, ' It is the will of God.'

The Russian officers added, " that they were above all things astonished at the security we appeared to feel, notwithstanding the approach of their formidable winter. That was their natural and most potent ally. They expected it now to come on every moment. They sincerely compassionated us ; they advised us to retreat without a moment's delay. Within a fortnight," they said, " your nails will fall off, and your weapons drop from your benumbed and half-dead hands."

The language also of some of the Cossack chiefs was much noticed. They asked our people, " whether they had not corn, and air, and graves enough ; in a word, room enough to live and die, in their own country ? If so, why did they roam so far from their domestic altars and happiness, and come to fatten a foreign soil with their blood ?" They added, " that such conduct was an act of robbery of their native country. To that they owed, while living, the cultivation, defence, and embellishment of it, and in death they owed it that body which had been derived from it, and nourished by it, and from which, in turn, it might derive nourishment itself."

The emperor was acquainted with these suggestions and admonitions, but he constantly discouraged and repelled them, lest they should operate to change his determination. The uneasiness which had again taken possession of his mind disclosed itself in angry orders. It was at this period that he effected the

spoliation of the churches of the Kremlin of every thing that could serve as a trophy to the grand army. Those things, he said, which the Russians themselves had devoted to destruction, belonged by right to the conquerors ; by the double right, indeed, arising from victory, and, more especially, from the wilful conflagration.

Great exertions were required to detach from the tower of the Great Ivan its gigantic cross. He had destined it to adorn the dome of the Invalids at Paris. With the possession of this monument the Russians connected the salvation of their empire. While the work of removing it was going on, it was remarked that a vast flight of ravens were incessantly hovering around the cross, and that Napoleon, annoyed by their ominous croakings, observed, " It seems as if these unlucky birds were resolved to defend it." It is impossible to say what, in that critical position of his affairs, was the full current of his thoughts ; but it is well known that he was strongly inclined to the doctrine of presentiment.

His daily excursions, wherein he was always accompanied by a brilliant sun in which he endeavoured to induce both himself and others to discern his own guiding and ascendant star, failed to animate and divert his mind. To the melancholy silence of lifeless Moscow was joined that of the deserts which surround it, and the still more affecting and formidable silence of Alexander. The feeble sounds of the footsteps of our soldiers who were wandering within the precincts of this vast tomb, were totally unable to withdraw him from his reverie, and drive from his mind the cruel recollections, or still more cruel anticipations, which now overwhelmed it.

His nights were more particularly restless and ha-

rassing. He spent a part of them in the society of the count Daru. In this society alone he admitted the danger of his position. "From Wilna to Moscow, what submission of the population, or what point of support, rest, or retreat, existed to prove his power? That space was, in reality, an immense bare and desert field of battle, in which his dreadfully diminished army would be almost an invisible point, unconnected, unsupplied, and straying amidst the horrors of a boundless waste. In this country of foreign manners and religion, he had not conquered a single man; he had merely made himself master of the ground which he for the moment occupied. That which he had left behind him was no more his than that which he had never reached. Insufficient for these vast solitudes, he felt as it were lost in their immensity."

He then took a rapid view of the different plans now left for his selection. "Some men," he observed, "conceived that he had nothing to do but to march; not considering that a month was necessary to recruit his army, and give time for the evacuation of his hospitals, and that, if he abandoned his wounded, the Cossacks would obtain daily triumphs over his sick and stragglers. His march would carry the appearance of flight. That word would resound to the extremities of Europe, which was full of envy at his success, and, after long seeking to find a rival under whom to rally, would then think it had found one in Alexander."

Then, appreciating the wonderful power which he derived from the prevailing belief in his infallibility, he shuddered at the very idea of giving for the first time a shock to it. "What a frightful succession of perilous wars would date from his first retrograde movement! Let no one, therefore, any longer blame my inactivity. I perfectly well know that in a military

point of view Moscow is absolutely worthless. But Moscow, although not a military position, is a political one. I am conceived to be general while I really am emperor there!" He then observed "that, in politics, a man never must go back, never return over the ground he has once passed, never on any account admit that he has been in error, that this would destroy all his consequence and consideration; that even when he knows himself in the wrong he should persevere, and that perseverance would soon put him in the right."

Such were his reasons for persisting with that tenacity which had, in former instances, been his most valuable and fortunate quality, but was now his greatest defect.

In the mean time his anxiety increased. He knew that he could place no dependence on the army of Prussia; and a communication, from authority to be relied on, sent to Berthier, destroyed his confidence in the support of that of Austria. Kutusof he clearly saw was merely trying to cajole him, but he found that he had advanced so far, that he could neither proceed nor remain where he was, retreat nor fight with honour and success. In this state of incessant fluctuation, alternately urged forward and restrained, according to his varying view of his circumstances, he still hovered over his Moscow embers in eager wishes, but scarcely admitted hopes.

The letter which he had despatched by Lauriston ought to have been sent off on the 6th of October, the answer could scarcely arrive before the 20th; and notwithstanding the various indications which menaced him, the pride, the policy, and perhaps the health of Napoleon induced him to adopt the most dangerous of all resolves, that of waiting the arrival

of the desired answer, and trusting to time, which was in fact destroying him. Daru, as well as his other officers, was absolutely astonished to find in him nothing of that animated, appropriate, and rapid decision, which corresponded with the emergency of circumstances. They remarked that his mind could no longer accommodate itself to occasions, and imputed all to that natural tenacity which had led to his elevation, and would now bring on his fall.

In a military position, however, thus critical from its complication with a political one as delicate and difficult as perhaps ever occurred, a hasty renunciation of the object which had been kept in view every moment from the time of his leaving Witepsk, could scarcely be expected from a man who had hitherto owed his greatness to his perseverance.

## CHAPTER XI.

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NAPOLEON, in fact, saw clearly the circumstances of his position. He concluded that all would be completely lost were he to exhibit to astonished Europe the spectacle of his retreat, and all preserved could he yet conquer Alexander in determination. He appreciated with too painful accuracy the means which he still possessed of shaking the firmness of his rival, and knew full well that the number of his men, his position, the season, and in short every circumstance, would every day become more and more unfavourable to him. But he depended upon the influence of that illusion to which he was indebted for his renown. Till the present crisis he had found in it a substantial and never-failing force; he, therefore, exerted himself by

specious reasonings to sustain the confidence of his adherents; and perhaps also the feeble hope which he now entertained himself.

“Moscow in its state of evacuation offered him no hold or advantage. This,” he said, “was undoubtedly a misfortune, but a misfortune which was at least attended with some advantage; had it been otherwise, he should have been unable to preserve order in so extensive a city, to keep down a population of three hundred thousand souls, or sleep in the Kremlin without being assassinated. Our enemies had left behind them nothing but ruins, but on those we could enjoy tranquillity. We were certainly expending millions, but the expenditure of Russia must amount to thousands of millions! Its commerce was perfectly ruined for a century! The nation had been put back full fifty years! That alone was a most important result! When the first transport of their ardour had passed away, they would be perfectly astonished and confounded by their reflections.” And he remarked in conclusion, “that this grand convulsion would inevitably shake Alexander’s throne, and compel that prince to apply to him for peace.”

If he reviewed his different *corps-d’armée*, their dreadfully reduced battalions presented to him a front exceedingly contracted, which he had passed in a few moments. This evident weakness much annoyed him; and whether he wished to conceal it as much as possible from the enemy, or even from his own troops, he observed, that the arrangement by three ranks was a very injudicious and erroneous one; that two were enough; and that, therefore, he would no longer form his infantry in more than two ranks.

Still more, he was resolved that the regular inflexibility of the official returns and statements should

bend to this illusion. He disputed the results delivered in. The obstinacy of count Lobau could not prevail over his: he thus endeavoured, unquestionably, to make his aide-de-camp comprehend what he wished others should believe, and that nothing was capable of shaking his determination.

Nevertheless, Murat had communicated to him intelligence of the distress of his advanced guard, and called earnestly for assistance. Berthier was struck with terror by the statements from him. But Napoleon sent for the officer who brought them, pressed him with his questions, confounded him by his looks, and absolutely overwhelmed him with consternation by his incredulity; and the assertions of Murat's messenger abated consequently greatly in their strength. Napoleon availed himself of the officer's hesitation to revive the hopes of Berthier, and persuade him that they might still safely wait: and he sent back the officer to Murat's camp with the opinion, which undoubtedly he would not delay circulating, that the emperor was decided, that he had no doubt the best reasons for persisting, and that it was necessary for every one to redouble his exertions. A lofty and confident bearing for a few days more might alone give efficacy to his negotiations.

The attitude of the army, in the mean time seconded, his desires. The greater number of the officers were still full of hope; and the private soldiers, who are in the habit of considering their lives as consisting of the passing moment, who expect little from the future, and therefore never disturb themselves about it, preserved that thoughtlessness of character which is the most valuable of all their qualities. The rewards, however, which the emperor liberally distributed among them in the daily reviews, were received only with a



sedate and sometimes saddened satisfaction; and the vacant places that were just filled up were still covered with blood. These favours were menacing.

After quitting Wilna, many of them had thrown away their winter clothing, that they might be able to carry more provisions. Travelling had worn out their shoes, and the rest of their clothes had been worn out by fighting. But notwithstanding all, their attitude was commanding. They carefully concealed their bareness of dress from the emperor, and made the best appearance they could before him, with their arms glittering and in good order. In the first court of the palace of the Czars, at the distance of eight hundred leagues from their resources, and after so great a number of battles and *bivouacs*, they were still desirous of appearing neat, alert, and even brilliant: for these are considered as points of honour by the common soldiers; they attached more value to them on account of the great difficulty of accomplishing them, in order to excite wonder and admiration, and in consequence of that universal feeling of our nature which leads a man to pride himself in that which can be effected only with difficulty.

The emperor was lending himself readily to these innocent and even laudable deceptions, and availing himself of these and all other circumstances that could assist his hopes, when suddenly came on the first fall of snow, and with it, fell to the ground all those flattering illusions which he had till then cherished. He then thought only of retreat, without, however, even then uttering the obnoxious term, and without any one's being able to wrest from him a positive order announcing it. He merely said, that in the course of twenty days it would be necessary for the army to be in winter quarters; and he also urged forward the

departure of the wounded. On this, as on other occasions, his pride could not submit to the least voluntary abandonment. Teams were wanted for the artillery, which was now vastly too numerous for an army so much reduced. That circumstance, however, made no difference to him, and the idea of leaving any part at Moscow was highly irritating to him. "No; the enemy would make a trophy of it." And he ordered the whole of them to be conveyed away with the army.

In this desert country he ordered twenty thousand horses to be purchased; and two months' forage to be provided from a district on which dangerous and distant circuits were obliged to be taken every day to obtain a scanty supply of food for that day alone. Some of his friends were astonished at hearing him deliver such impracticable orders; but, as we have already noticed, he sometimes issued them to deceive his enemies, and more frequently to indicate to his own troops the magnitude of his wants, and the proportional efforts which would be necessary to supply them.

His agitation appeared only in a few touches of ill humour. These occurred at his morning levee. There, in the midst of his assembled chiefs, observing their uneasy and, as he conceived, disapproving looks, he appeared desirous of repressing them by an attitude of severity and a sharp and concentrated tone of voice. From the paleness of his countenance it was manifest that truth, which never speaks more persuasively than in the hours of darkness, had long weighed upon his mind, and oppressed him by her importunate beams. On those occasions, his heart sometimes overcharged with grief overflowed on those around him, and showed it in sallies of reproof and impatience: but instead

of thus finding relief from his chagrin, he relapsed into it still more deeply, from the added weight of the injustice of these attacks, which he was afterwards always eager to repair.

It was only in the presence of count Daru that he indulged in the free, yet not weak and unmanly effusion of his feelings. "He was going," he said, "to march against Kutusof, to crush him altogether or to remove him out of the way, and then to turn suddenly towards Smolensk." But Daru, who till now, had recommended this as the best plan that could be followed, replied "that it was now too late; that the Russian army had been reinforced, his own enfeebled, and his victory forgotten; that when his army had once turned its face towards France, it would escape from him by detail. That every soldier who carried away plunder with him would be eager to press on before the rest, to sell what he had obtained in France." "What then," says the emperor, "is to be done?" "Stay here!" replied Daru, "convert Moscow into one great intrenched camp; and pass the winter in it. There would be bread and salt in plenty, he was confident: and with respect to other supplies, an extensive system of forage would procure them. Those horses for which they could not find provender, he proposed to slaughter and have salted for provisions; and with respect to lodgings, if houses were wanting, cellars would be no bad substitutes for them, and were to be had in abundance. We might thus wait in safety for spring, when our recruits and the whole Lithuanian army would arrive to disengage us, to join us, and to complete the conquest."

After hearing this proposition, the emperor remained at first silent and thoughtful. He then replied, "This is the counsel of a lion! But what would Paris

say? What would it do? What would be going on there? What had taken place there in the last three weeks, in which they had received no intelligence from him? And who therefore could say what might not happen when all communication was barred for six months! No, France must not become accustomed to my absence; and Prussia and Austria would both avail themselves of it."

However, Napoleon had not yet made up his mind whether to remain or to depart. Being vanquished in this contest of obstinacy, he postponed from day to day the mortifying confession of his defeat. In the midst of this dreadful storm of men and elements thickening around him, his ministers and aides-de-camp observed him employing the latter days of his residence in Moscow in discussing the merits of some new verses which he had just received, or on a system of regulation for the "*Comédie Française*," at Paris, to the completion of which he devoted three evenings. As they were aware of all his anxiety, they could not help admiring the strength of his mind, and the facility with which, precisely as he wished, he withdrew or attached the whole power of his attention.

It was remarked at this period that he extended the time of his meals, which had hitherto been exceedingly short as well as simple. He seemed to strive to shake off the pressure of his thoughts and feelings, by the gratifications of the table; then, he would recline on his sofa for hours together, and with a romance in his hand, appear to be awaiting in a sort of stupor the *dénouement* of his extraordinary history. On observing this obstinate and inflexible mind thus struggling with impossibility, those about him could not help remarking to each other, that, having attained the height of his elevation, he felt a decided pre-

sentiment, that from his first retrograde movement would date the declension of his power; and that this it was which kept him inactive, tenacious, and while he yet was able lingering for a few moments longer on the summit.

In the mean time Kutusof was gaining all the time which we were losing. His letters to Alexander stated "his army to be enjoying the greatest abundance, that his recruits were arriving from all quarters, and regularly exercising, his wounded recovering under the care of their families; all the peasantry in actual levy, some in arms, others on the tops of churches for observation, others spies in our camps, and some insinuating themselves into our houses and into the Kremlin itself. Every day Rostopchin received from them a report concerning Moscow as regularly as before the conquest. If they undertook to be our guides, they did so in order to betray us. His partisans brought him in some hundreds of prisoners every day. Every thing contributed to the destruction of the enemy's army, and to the augmentation of his own. All were serving him, and betraying us. In short, the campaign was at an end for us, but with them was only now beginning."

Kutusof did not neglect a single advantage. He celebrated the victory of Salamanca, by a salvo in his camp. "The French," he said, "were driven from Madrid. The arm of the Almighty was heavy on Napoleon. Moscow would be his prison, and the grave both of himself and of his army. He was going to capture France in Russia!" In this style did the Russian general address his own troops and his emperor; and yet, at the same time, he was dissembling with Murat. At once fierce and artful, he could prepare with all necessary caution and concealment

for the most sudden and ferocious attacks, and disguise the most baleful projects by honied words and flattering caresses.

At length, after too many days of illusion, the spell at length was broken. This was produced by the conduct of a Cossack. The barbarian fired at Murat at the very instant when that prince had arrived, as he had often recently done, at the advanced posts. Murat was exasperated, and announced to Miloradowitch that an armistice which had been incessantly violated was now completely at an end; and that from that moment each could rely only upon himself.

He at the same time informed the emperor that the covered country on his left laid him open to surprises both on his flank and rear; that his first line backed by a ravine was exposed to be precipitated into it; and, in short, that the position which he occupied in advance of a defile was a dangerous one, and required him to make a retrograde movement. But Napoleon could not prevail upon himself to consent to it, although at first he had pointed out Woronowo as a position of more security. In this war, which he still continued to consider as more political than military, he dreaded more than any thing the appearance of turning back; he preferred risking every thing.

However, on the 13th of October, Lauriston was despatched to Murat, to examine the position of the advanced guard. As for the emperor, whether from the tenaciousness of his original hope, or because every arrangement indicating retreat wounded at once his pride and policy, a singular negligence was observed in his preparations for departure. His thoughts nevertheless were actually engaged about it; for on that same day he drew out his plan of retreat by Woklamsk, Zubtzwow, and Bieloï, upon Witepsk. A

moment after, he dictated another upon Smolensk. Junot received orders to burn on the 21st, at Kolot-skoï, all the muskets of the wounded, and to blow up the caissons. D'Hilliers was to take possession of Elnia, and form magazines there. It was not till the 17th that Berthier, for the first time since reaching Moscow, thought of giving out a distribution of leather.

That major-general was in the present critical circumstances a very inadequate substitute for his chief. Amidst a soil and climate perfectly new, he recommended no new precaution; and he expected the minutest details to be dictated to him by the emperor. They were forgotten. This negligence, or want of foresight, was attended with fatal consequences. In an army in which each corps was commanded by a marshal, a prince, or even a king, some probably depended too much upon others. Besides, Berthier gave no orders himself. He contented himself with repeating accurately to the very letter, the dictations of Napoleon; for as to the sense and spirit of them, whether through fatigue or habit, he was incessantly confounding the positive part of these instructions with the contingent and conjectural part.

In the mean time Napoleon rallied his *corps d'armée*; he reviewed the troops more frequently at the Kremlin, formed all the dismounted cavalry into battalions, and made a magnificent distribution of rewards. The trophies, and those of the wounded who were capable of travelling, were sent on to Mojaisk. The rest were collected in the great Foundling Hospital; French surgeons were left to attend them; and the wounded Russians intermingled with them would, it was conceived, be a protection for them.

But it was too late. In the midst of these prepara-

tions, and at the moment when Napoleon was reviewing, in the first court of the Kremlin, the divisions of Ney, a report suddenly prevailed of a cannonading near Winkowo. It was some time before any one would venture to inform him of it ; some declining the task from incredulity or suspense, and the apprehension of a rebuff of impatience, others from an indolent and effeminate hesitation to provoke a terrible signal, or from fear of being despatched to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the intelligence, and thus exposing themselves to a harassing excursion.

At last, Duroc resolved to inform him of it. The emperor at first changed colour, but rapidly recovered himself and proceeded in his review. In a short time, an aide-de-camp, the younger Beranger, arrived, and hastened up to him. He announced that the first line of Murat had been surprised and completely defeated, his left turned by means of some woods, his flank attacked, and his retreat cut off ; that twelve pieces of cannon, twenty caissons, and thirty train-waggons had been taken ; two generals killed, and between three and four thousand men lost, together with the baggage ; and that the king himself was wounded. He was unable to rescue the remains of his advanced guard but by reiterated charges against the numerous troops who already occupied the high road behind him, which was his only retreat.

Honour, however, had been preserved. The attack in front, conducted by Kutusof, had been faint ; Poniatowski, some leagues to the right, had resisted gloriously. Murat and the carbineers, by efforts more than human, had checked Bagawout who had been on the point of breaking through our left flank ; they had restored the chances of the battle. Claparede and Latour-Maubourg had cleared the defile of Spaska-



plia, of which Platof had already gained possession, two leagues in the rear of our line. Two Russian generals had been killed, and others wounded; the loss of the enemy had been considerable; but they had retained the advantage of the attack, our cannon, our position, and finally, in fact the victory.

Murat had in reality, now, no advanced guard. The armistice had destroyed half of the cavalry that had been previously left, and this engagement had completed its destruction. Its miserable remnant, extenuated by famine, could scarcely furnish sufficient numbers or strength for a charge. Such had been the recommencement of the war. This was on the 18th of October.

On receiving this intelligence, Napoleon recovered all the fire of his earlier years. A thousand orders, some resulting from a general view of the case, others reaching to its minutest details, all different from each other, yet all in conformity, and all necessary, burst at once from his impetuous and comprehensive genius; and, before night came on, his whole army was in motion towards Woronowo. Broussier was to take the direction of Fominskoe, and Poniatowski, that towards Medyn. The emperor himself, before day-break on the 19th of October, quitted Moscow, and exclaimed, "Let us march upon Kalouga, and woe be to those whom I may meet with on my passage!"

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## BOOK IX.

## CHAPTER I.

IN the southern part, and near one of the gates of Moscow, one of its most extensive suburbs is divided into two great roads. Both of them lead to Kalouga ; the one on the left is the oldest, the other is recently made. It was upon the former that Kutusof had just beaten Murat. By this same road Napoleon quitted Moscow on the 19th of October, announcing to his officers, that he was going to regain the frontiers of Poland by Kalouga, Medyn, Iuknow, Elnia, and Smolensk. Rapp observed, " that it was late, and that the winter might overtake us on the road." The emperor replied, " that he had been obliged to allow time for the soldiers to rest ; and for the wounded, collected at Moscow, Mojaïsk, and Kolotskoi, to proceed to Smolensk ;" then, pointing to a sky still without a cloud, he asked them, " whether in that brilliant sun they did not recognise his protecting star ?" But this appeal to his fortune, and the foreboding expression of his countenance belied the security which he affected. Napoleon, who had entered Moscow, with ninety thousand effective men, and twenty thousand sick and wounded, quitted it with more than a hundred thousand effective men. He left only twelve hundred sick. His stay, notwithstanding his

daily losses, had enabled him to rest his infantry, to complete his stock of ammunition, to increase his force by ten thousand men, and to protect the recovery or the retreat of the greater part of his wounded. But from this very first day he might perceive that his cavalry and his artillery rather crawled along than marched. A distressing sight enhanced the gloomy forebodings of our chief. From the preceding evening, the army had been moving out of Moscow without interruption. In this column of a hundred and forty thousand men, and nearly fifty thousand horses of every description, a hundred thousand effective troops marching at the head, with their knapsacks and their arms, more than five hundred and fifty field pieces, and two thousand artillery waggons, still bore that character of terrible and warlike array which became the victors of the world. But the remainder, which bore a frightful proportion, resembled a horde of Tartars after a successful invasion. It consisted of three or four almost endless files, of a confused assemblage of calèches, caissons, elegant carriages, and waggons and carts of every description. Here were seen trophies of Russian, Turkish, and Persian flags, and the gigantic cross of Iwan the Great; there, bearded Russian peasants, driving or carrying our booty, of which themselves formed a part; in another place, soldiers dragging along by main force wheelbarrows filled with every thing they could carry away. These stupid and reckless beings did not perceive that it was impossible for them to accomplish one day's march in this way—eight hundred leagues, and all the battles which lay before them, disappeared before their insane rapacity.

In this long train of followers was a strange and motley crowd of men of all nations, without uniforms

or arms ; valets were swearing in every language, and urging on by blows and shouts ponies harnessed with ropes to elegant carriages. They were filled with plunder snatched from the flames, or with provisions. They were also laden with French women and children, but lately tranquil and happy inhabitants of Moscow, now flying from the hatred of the Muscovites, which the invasion had drawn down upon their heads ; the army was their only refuge. A few Russian girls, voluntary captives, also followed. One might have taken it for a caravan, a wandering tribe, or rather for one of the armies of antiquity returning from the work of destruction, laden with slaves and with spoil. It was impossible to conceive how the head of this column could draw after it, and support through a route of such extent, so cumbrous a mass of baggage-train.

In spite of the width of the road and the shouts of his escort, it was with difficulty that Napoleon made his way through this vast multitude. A difficult pass, a few forced marches, or a skirmish with a troop of Cossacks, would indeed have soon freed us from all this incumbrance ; but chance, or the enemy, had alone the power of thus relieving us.

The emperor was very sensible that he could neither take from his soldiers the fruit of such unexampl'd labours, nor even reproach them for the possession of it. Besides, the booty was generally concealed under provisions ; and how could he to whom they looked in vain for the subsistence it was his duty to provide, forbid them to seize it for themselves ? Lastly, in the want of military conveyances, these carriages were the only means of preserving the sick and the wounded.

Napoleon therefore extricated himself from the im-

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mense train which he drew after him and advanced on the old road to Kalouga. He pushed on in this direction for several hours, declaring that he would conquer Kutusof on the very field of his victory. But having halted in the middle of the day at the height upon which stands the castle of Krasno-pachra, he suddenly turned to the right, and in three marches across the fields reached the new road to Kalouga. In the midst of this manœuvre, he was overtaken by rain, which rendered the cross-roads impassable, and obliged him to halt. This was a great misfortune. Our guns were with difficulty dragged through the swamps.

The emperor had, however, masked his movement by means of Ney's corps and the remains of Murat's cavalry, which had remained behind at Motscha and at Woronowo. Kutusof, deceived by this feint, was still expecting the main army by the old road ; whilst, having gained the new road in a body, on the 23rd of October, one day's march would enable it to pass quietly by the side of his position, and to reach Kalouga before him.

On the first day of this movement on Kutusof's flank, Berthier addressed a letter to him, which was a last overture towards peace, and perhaps at the same time a stratagem of war. It received no satisfactory answer.

## CHAPTER II.

ON the 23rd, the imperial head-quarters were at Borowsk. This night was one of happiness to the emperor; he learned that Delzons and his division, which

was four leagues in advance, had found Malo-Iaroslavetz and the woods which overhang it unoccupied, at six o'clock in the evening. This was a strong position within reach of Kutusof, and the only point upon which he could cut us off from the new Kalouga road.

The emperor was at first determined to secure this advantage in person. The order to march was even given, nor is it known why it was retracted. He passed the whole of the evening on horseback, at a distance from Borowsk, on the left road, in which direction he supposed Kutusof to be. He examined the ground under a heavy rain, as if he saw in it the field of a future battle. On the following day, the 24th, he heard that the Russians disputed the possession of Malo-Iaroslavetz with Delzons. He showed no emotion at this intelligence, either from confidence, or from uncertainty as to his future movements.

He therefore quitted Borowsk, at a late hour, and without any appearance of haste, when the noise of a very warm engagement reached him. He then appeared agitated, rode hastily up a height and listened. "Had the Russians forestalled him? had his manœuvre failed? had not this march, in which he was forced to pass the left flank of Kutusof, been sufficiently rapid?"

It has been said that the whole of this movement was characterised by a little of that torpor which is the consequence of a long repose. Moscow is only a hundred and ten wersts from Malo-Iaroslavetz; four days were sufficient to accomplish this distance—we were six in doing it. But the army, overloaded with provisions and booty, was cumbrous, and the roads were swampy.

A whole day was consumed in passing the Nara

and its marshes, and in rallying the different corps. It was also necessary, in defiling so near the enemy, to march in close column, that we might not offer him too long a flank. Whatever were the causes of our delay, certain it is that all our misfortunes may be dated from it.

The emperor continued to listen; the noise increased—"Can it be a battle?" said he. Every discharge was torture to him, for it was no longer a question of victory but of preservation. He urged on Davoust, who followed him, but who did not reach the field of battle till night, when the firing was growing faint, and when all was decided. The emperor saw the end of the combat, but without the power of succouring the viceroy. A band of Cossacks of Twer were very near taking one of his officers prisoner, at a short distance from him.

As soon as it was night, a general sent by prince Eugene came to explain all that had passed. He said, "that they had been forced to pass the Louja at the foot of Malo-Iaroslavetz in the bottom of a bed formed by its course; then to climb a steep and rugged hill, broken by sharp projections, upon which the town is built. Beyond is a lofty plain surrounded by woods, whence issue three roads, the one directly in front, which leads from Kalouga, and two on the left, from Lectazowo, Kutusof's intrenched camp. Delzons had found no enemy yesterday; but he did not think proper to place his whole division in this elevated town, across a river and a defile, and on the edge of a precipice, down which he might have been thrown by a nocturnal surprise. He, therefore, halted on the lower bank of the Louja, and sent only two battalions to occupy the town, and to observe the plain above."

“ The night was just spent ; it was four o'clock, and all were still asleep in Delzons' bivouacs, except a few sentinels, when all on a sudden Doctorof and his troops rushed out of the wood with horrible shouts. Our sentinels were driven back upon their posts, the posts upon the battalions, the battalions upon the division ; nor was it a *coup-de-main*, for the Russians were furnished with cannon.

“ From the commencement of the attack, the discharges of artillery had carried the tidings of a serious engagement to the viceroy, at three leagues distance.” He added “ that the prince then hastened to the field with some of his officers, and that his divisions and his guard had followed him with the greatest precipitation. As he drew near the scene of action, a vast moving amphitheatre opened before him ; the Louja marked its foot and a cloud of Russian sharp-shooters already disputed its banks. Behind them, and from the top of the escarpment of the town, their advanced guard poured down its fire upon Delzons : beyond, on the plain above, Kutusof's whole army, in two long and black columns, advanced rapidly by the two roads of Lectazowo. They were seen to spread and to intrench themselves over the whole of this bare declivity of half a league in every direction from its centre, whence they commanded all beneath by their number and their position ; already we saw them establishing themselves across that old road to Kalouga, which but yesterday was unoccupied, and which we might then have taken possession of, or have traversed in any direction, but which Kutusof might now defend inch by inch.

“ At the same time, the enemy's artillery had taken advantage of the heights which skirted the river on his side ; his fire crossed the bottom of the winding channel in which Delzons and his troops were en-



closed. The position was untenable, and any hesitation fatal. It was absolutely necessary to extricate ourselves from it, either by a prompt retreat, or by an impetuous attack ; but our retreat lay before us, and the viceroy ordered the attack.

“ After crossing the Louja by a narrow bridge, the great road to Kalouga enters Malo-Iaroslavetz, following the course of a ravine which ascends into the town. The Russians filled this hollow way in a mass. Delzons and his Frenchmen rushed in headlong ; the Russians were broken and overthrown ; they gave way, and bayonets soon glittered upon the heights. Delzons, thinking himself sure of the victory, proclaimed

There remained only an enclosure of buildings to carry, but the soldiers hesitated. He advanced, and was encouraging them by his voice, his gesture, and his example, when a ball struck him on the forehead, and felled him to the ground. His brother threw himself upon him, covered him with his body, pressed him in his arms, and tried to rescue him from the fire and the press—a second ball reached himself, and they expired together.

“ This loss left a great void which it was necessary instantly to fill. Guilleminot succeeded Delzons in the command, and immediately threw a hundred grenadiers into a church and its burying-ground, in the walls of which, they made holes for the reception of musketry. This church was situated on the left of the high road which it commanded ; we owed the victory to it. Five times during the engagement this post was passed by Russian columns in pursuit of our troops, and five times did the fire from thence, skillfully and successfully directed against their flank and their rear, embarrass and slacken the force of their onset ; and when we afterwards resumed a posture o

offence, this position placed them between two fires, and secured the success of our attacks.

“Scarcely had general Guilleminot made this disposition, when he was assailed by clouds of Russians ; he was driven back upon the bridge, upon which the viceroy had stationed himself to watch the action and to prepare his reserves. The succours which he sent at first, came in but feebly, a few at a time ; and as always happens, each of them, being insufficient to make a grand effort, was successively cut off without producing any result.

“At length, the whole of the fourteenth division was engaged. The fight then reascended, and was a third time transferred to the heights. But as soon as the French passed the houses, as soon as they left the central point from which they set out, as soon as they showed themselves in the plain where they were uncovered, and where the circle became wider, they were no longer able to make an effective resistance ; exposed to the fire of an entire army, they were bewildered and confused ; fresh Russians came on every moment ; and our thinned ranks were repulsed and broken. The disadvantages of the ground increased their disorder, and they once more made a precipitate descent, and abandoned all they had gained.

“ But the howitzers had set fire to the city of wood behind them ; in their retreat they met the conflagration, and were driven back upon the enemy’s fire ; the Russian recruits became infuriated, our soldiers were indignant ; they fought man to man ; they seized each other with one hand, while they struck with the other ; and conquering or conquered rolled down to the bottom of the precipice, and into the flames, without quitting their grasp. There the wounded expired, either stifled by the smoke or consumed among the

burning ruins. Their scorched and blackened skeletons soon presented a hideous spectacle to the eye, which traced in them the remains of the human form.

"All, however, did not do their duty equally well. One officer, a great talker, was observed at the bottom of the ravine wasting, in declamation, the time so precious for action. He detained a sufficient number of men in this place of safety to warrant his remaining there himself, leaving the others to expose themselves in detail, without union or design.

"The fifteenth division still remained. The viceroy ordered it to advance, which it did, throwing one brigade to the left into a suburb, and another to the right into the town. They were Italian recruits; it was their first battle. They mounted the hill with shouts of enthusiasm, either ignorant of the danger, or contemning it, from that strange disposition of the human mind, which renders life less dear in its spring than in its decline; whether it be that in youth our fear of death is diminished by an instinctive feeling of its remoteness; or that the young triumphing in the consciousness of abundance of days, and prodigal of every thing, lavish their lives as rich men lavish their wealth.

"The shock was terrible; every thing was a fourth time reconquered, and a fourth time lost. These young soldiers, more ardent than the veterans in the onset, were sooner discouraged, and fled back to the old battalions, which were obliged to support them, and to lead them back to danger.

"At this moment the Russians, emboldened by their constantly increasing numbers and by success, descended on their right to take possession of the bridge and to cut off all retreat. Prince Eugene was reduced to his last reserve; he came into action himself

with his guard. At this sight, and at his shouts, the remains of the 13th, 14th, and 15th divisions rallied; they made a last and powerful effort, and for the fifth time, the battle was carried up to the heights.

“ At the same time colonel Peraldi, and the Italian chasseurs overthrew, at the point of the bayonet, the Russians, who were already within sight of the left of the bridge; and without stopping to take breath, intoxicated by the smoke and the fire they had passed through, by the blows they had given, and by their victory, they rushed on to a considerable distance on the plain above, and tried to get possession of the enemy’s cannon;—but one of those deep refts by which the soil of Russia is furrowed stopped them under a destructive fire; their ranks opened, they were attacked by the enemy’s cavalry, and driven down to the gardens of the suburb. There they halted and closed their ranks. Frenchmen and Italians defended the upper entrances to the town with equal fury, and the Russians repulsed at length, fell back and concentrated their forces on the road to Kalouga, between the wood and Malo-Iaroslavetz.”

Thus did eighteen thousand French and Italians, huddled together in the bottom of a ravine, conquer fifty thousand Russians placed above their heads, and seconded by all the obstacles which a town built on a rapid declivity could present. The army, nevertheless, contemplated with grief this field of battle, on which seven generals, and four thousand French and Italians lay killed or wounded. The loss sustained by the enemy did not console them, it was not double our own, and their wounded were saved. They recollected, too, that, in a similar situation, Peter I., when he sacrificed ten Russians to one Swede, thought that his loss, not only did not exceed that of his enemy,

but even that he was a gainer by the terrible exchange. Above all they had the bitter and heart-rending thought that this bloody contest might have been avoided.

In fact the fires which gleamed on our right, during the nights of the 23rd and 24th, gave notice of the movement of the Russians towards Malo-Iaroslavetz, and yet it was remarked that our march thither was languid ; that a single division, thrown at a distance of three leagues from all succour, had been negligently risked there, that the different corps of the army had been posted out of each other's reach. Where were the rapid and decisive movements of Marengo, Ulm, and Eckmuhl ? Why this indolent and encumbered march under circumstances so critical ? Was it our artillery and baggage-train that thus deadened and paralyzed our movements ? That appears to be the most probable conjecture.

### CHAPTER III.

WHEN the emperor received the report of this battle, he was in a weaver's hut, a few steps to the right of the high road, at the bottom of a ravine, on the banks of the rivulet and village of Ghorodinia ; it was built of wood, ruinous and filthy. It stood half a league from Malo-Iaroslavetz, at the entrance to the turn of the Louja. In this crumbling hovel, in a dark and dirty chamber, divided into two by means of a cloth, the fate of the army and of Europe was to be decided.

The early part of the night was passed in receiving intelligence. All agreed that the enemy was preparing for a battle on the morrow, which all were

desirous of avoiding. At eleven o'clock Bessieres entered. This marshal owed his elevation to the length of his services, and especially to the affection of the emperor, who had attached himself to him as to a creature of his own. It is true that a man could not become a favourite with Napoleon by the means which conciliate monarchs in general, he must at least have followed him, and have been of some use to him, for the emperor cared little about merely agreeable qualities; in short, he would have men about him who had been something more than witnesses of so many victories; and worn out, at length, by his immense exertions, he accustomed himself to look with the eyes he thought he had formed.

He had just sent Bessieres to examine the enemy's attitude. The marshal obeyed; he carefully passed along the front of the position the Russians had taken up. "It is," said he, "unattackable." "Oh heaven!" said the emperor, clasping his hands, "did you see rightly? Are you sure this is true? Can you answer for it?" Bessieres repeated his assertion; he affirmed that three hundred grenadiers, in that position, would be sufficient to arrest the progress of a whole army. Napoleon crossed his arms with an air of consternation, his head fell upon his breast; and he seemed absorbed in the most melancholy reflections. "His army is victorious, and he is conquered! His way is cut off, his manœuvres foiled! Kutusof, an old man, a Scythian, has intercepted him! Nor can he accuse his star. Has not the sun of France appeared to follow him into Russia? Even so lately as yesterday, was not the road to Malo-Iaroslavetz unoccupied? Fortune therefore has not been wanting towards him—is it possible that he can have been wanting towards fortune?"

Lost in this abyss of desolating thoughts, he fell into so great a contention of spirit, that none of his attendants could draw a word from him.—Scarcely, with the utmost importunity, could they succeed in obtaining the least sign. At length he wished to take some repose; but the most burning restlessness pursued him. All the remainder of that dreadful night he lay down, rose up again, called incessantly for his people, yet not a word betrayed his distress: the agitation of his body alone betrayed to his attendants the tempest which tossed his mind.

About four o'clock in the morning, one of his attendant officers, prince d'Aremberg, came to inform him that some Cossacks, under cover of the night, and of the wood, and favoured by some inequalities of the ground, were gliding between him and his advanced posts. The emperor had just sent Poniatowski on his right to Kremenskoï. He had so little expectation of the enemy on that side, that he had neglected to post videttes on his right flank. He therefore disregarded the information of the officer.

As soon as the sun of the 25th appeared above the horizon, he mounted his horse and advanced on the road to Kalouga, which to him was only that to Malo-Iaroslavetz. To reach the bridge of that city, he had to cross a plain of half a league square, surrounded by the windings of the Louja. He was followed only by a few officers. The four squadrons of his customary escort, not having received notice, were hastening to join him, but had not yet come up. The road was thronged with the medical chests and waggons, with artillery and carriages for the use of the officers. It was the interior of the army, every one marched in confidence and security.

Some small parties were now descried at a distance,

towards the right, their long black lines were seen advancing. A confused clamour next arose. Some women and boys were seen returning, running, incapable of either understanding or answering any question whatever, frantic, breathless and speechless with terror. The waggon-train stopped, hesitated, and were thrown into confusion; some wanted to go on, others to turn back; they drove against each other, some were upset, and in a short time the disorder and tumult were complete.

The emperor looked and smiled, thinking it a mere panic. His aides-de-camp suspected the Cossacks were advancing, but they saw them broken into such small parties, that they were still in doubt; if these wretches had not yelled when they came to the attack, as they always do, as if to stun themselves and blunt their sense of danger, perhaps Napoleon himself would not have escaped them. What increased the danger was that the noise was at first mistaken for acclamations, and their hurrahs for shouts of "Vive l'Empereur."

It was Platof with six thousand Cossacks, who, in the rear of our victorious advanced guard, had attempted to cross the river, the low plain, and the high road, carrying off every thing in their passage; and at this very moment when the emperor, tranquilly advancing in the midst of his army, between the windings of a deeply-bedded river, refused to give credit to so audacious a project, they executed it. Having once sprung forward, they approached so rapidly, that Rapp had only time to say to the emperor, "It is they, turn back." The emperor either did not see distinctly, or had so strong a reluctance to fly, that he persisted, and would have been surrounded, had not Rapp seized the bridle of his horse, and forced



him round, exclaiming, "You must!" and in fact, flight was absolutely necessary. Napoleon's pride could not bend to this. He put his hand on his sword, the prince of Neufchatel, and the *grand-écuyer* followed his example, and placing themselves on the left side of the road, they waited for the approach of the horde.

They were scarcely forty paces off, Rapp had only time to turn and face these barbarians, the first of whom plunged a lance with such violence into his horse's chest, that he threw him completely over. The other aides-de-camp and some horsemen of the guard disengaged Rapp from this perilous situation. This action, the courage of Lecoulteux, the efforts of about twenty officers and chasseurs, and above all the avidity of the barbarians for plunder, saved the emperor.

They had, indeed, only to reach out their hands to take it; for in crossing the high road, they had overthrown every thing in one moment, horses, men, and carriages; some they killed and wounded, dragging them off into the woods to strip them, and turning the horses harnessed to the guns, they led them away across the fields. But their's was but the victory of a moment—the triumph of a surprise. The cavalry of the guard came up; at this sight the cossacks abandoned their spoil and fled; and this torrent rolled away, leaving, it is true, traces of its destructive power, but bearing nothing in its farther course.

Several of these barbarians had, however, shown a boldness amounting to insolence. They were seen retreating with the utmost deliberation across the intervals between our squadrons, and quietly reloading their arms. They reckoned on the heaviness of our picked cavalry, upon the lightness of their own

horses, whom they urge on with the whip. Their flight was accomplished without disorder: they faced about several times, without, however, waiting till they were within reach of our fire, so that they left very few wounded, and not a single prisoner. Lastly, they had drawn us upon some ravines covered with underwood, where we were stopped by their cannon, which were waiting for them. All these circumstances deserved serious consideration. Our army was worn out, while the war was rekindled in all its freshness and integrity.

The emperor, struck with astonishment at the audacity of this attack, halted till the plain was cleared; he then proceeded to Malo-Iaroslavetz, where the viceroy showed him the obstacles which had been overcome the day before.

The ground itself told enough. Never was a field of battle more terribly eloquent! Its marked and abrupt forms, its blood-stained ruins, the streets whose course was now only to be traced by the long line of dead bodies and of heads crushed by the wheels of the artillery, the wounded who were still seen crawling from amidst the ruins, with their clothes, their hair and even their limbs half consumed, and uttering the most piteous cries; the melancholy sound of the last sad honours, which the grenadiers were paying to the remains of their colonels and generals; every thing bore witness to the fury of the struggle. The glory of it alone is said to have struck the emperor. He exclaimed, "that the honour of so glorious a day belonged to prince Eugene alone." It cannot be doubted, however, that this dreadful spectacle increased the gloomy impression which his mind had already received. He afterwards advanced into the plain above the town.

## CHAPTER IV.

**COMRADES**, do you recollect that fatal field upon which the conquest of the world was stopped ; upon which twenty years of victory were wrecked ; upon which began the decline, the ruin of our fortunes ? Can you not still see that ruined and blood-stained town ; those deep ravines, and the woods which surround the plain above, and give it the character of a field enclosed for combat. On one side are the French coming from the north which they seek to avoid ; on the other, at the entrance of the woods, the Russians guarding the south, and trying to drive us back upon their resistless winter ; between the two armies is Napoleon ; in the midst of this plain his eyes and his steps wander from the south to the west, on the roads to Kalouga and to Medyn : both are closed against him. On the Kalouga road, Kutusof, at the head of a hundred and twenty thousand men, appears ready to dispute twenty leagues of defiles. On the side of Medyn he sees a numerous body of horse ; it is Platof and those same hordes which have just penetrated the flank of his army, which crossed it from side to side, and which retired, loaded with booty, to form again on his right flank, where reinforcements and artillery awaited them. This is the side on which the emperor's eyes were longest fixed ; here he consulted his maps, advised with his generals, and discovered from the violent discordance in their opinions, of which even his presence did not moderate the expression, how critical was his position : then, weighed down with vain regrets and melancholy forebodings, he slowly returned to his head-quarters.

Murat, prince Eugene, Berthier, Davoust, and Bes-

sieres followed him. The miserable dwelling of an obscure artisan sheltered an emperor, two kings, and three generals. There was to be decided the fate of Europe, and of the army by which it had been conquered. The end in view was Smolensk. Were they to march upon it by Kalouga, Medyn, or Mojaïsk? Napoleon was seated before a table; his head rested on his hands, which concealed his features, and with them, doubtless, the distress which they betrayed.

All hesitated to interrupt a silence big with destinies so imminent and so vast; when Murat, whose only mode of action was by abrupt and impetuous bursts, became weary of the suspense. Listening to nothing but his own genius, and the boiling blood which flowed through his veins, he broke through this state of uncertainty by one of those impulses which either raise, or hurl headlong.

He rose, and exclaimed, "that he might be accused of imprudence, but that the circumstances of the war were such that every thing must be brought to a decision, and every thing called by its right name: that when nothing remained but to attack, prudence became rashness and rashness prudence; that to stop was impossible, to fly dangerous; that they must, therefore, pursue. What did the threatening attitude of the Russians and their impenetrable woods signify? He despised them. If the emperor would only give him the remains of his own cavalry, and the cavalry of the guard, he would plunge into the thick of their forests and of their battalions, he would rout them all, and open a way for the army to Kalouga."

Here Napoleon, raising his head, quenched all this fire by saying, "that there had been temerity enough, that too much had already been done for glory; that it was now time to think of nothing but of

saving the remnant of the army." Bessieres, then, actuated either by pride wounded at the idea of serving under the king of Naples, or by the desire of preserving unbroken that cavalry of the guard which he had formed, for which he was responsible to Napoleon, and upon which depended his command and his usefulness, feeling that he was supported by the emperor's opinion, ventured to add, "that there was not spirit enough in the army, nor even in the guard, for such exertions. It was already said that the waggon-train was insufficient, that the conqueror, if wounded, would henceforth remain a prey to the conquered; that every wound would then be mortal. Murat would therefore be languidly followed. And in what sort of a position? The strength of it had already been tried—against what enemies? Had they not observed the field of battle of the preceding day; had they not seen with what fury the Russian recruits, scarcely armed or clothed, advanced to be slaughtered." The marshal concluded by pronouncing the word *retreat*, which the emperor approved by his silence.

The prince of Eckmuhl then declared, "that since retreat was determined on, he requested that it might be by way of Medyn and Smolensk." Here Murat interrupted Davoust, and, either from animosity against him, or from the discouragement consequent on checked temerity, he professed to be astonished that anybody should dare to propose to the emperor an act of such imprudence. "Had Davoust sworn the destruction of the army? Did he wish that so long and so cumbrous a column should be dragged along without guides, and uncertain of its way, over an unknown country, within reach of Kutusof, presenting its flank to every stroke of the enemy? Would he, Davoust, undertake to defend it? And why,

when Borowsk and Vereia in our rear would lead us to Mojaisk without danger, should we refuse this way to safety? There provisions must have been collected; there every thing was known to us, no traitor could mislead us."

At these words, Davoust, burning with an anger which he could hardly repress, replied, "that he proposed a retreat across a fertile soil, over a new road, abounding in provisions, and unspoiled, through villages still standing, and by the shortest way, in order that the enemy might not cut us off from the road by Mojaisk to Smolensk, the one proposed by Murat. And what a road! A desert of sand and ashes, in which the train of wounded would add to our difficulties; in which we should find nothing but ruins, traces of blood, skeletons, and famine. That if his advice were asked, he was bound to give it; that he would obey a contrary order with the same zeal as one he himself had suggested; but that the emperor alone had a right to impose silence upon him and not Murat, who was not his sovereign, and never should be."

The general was becoming hot, when Bessieres and Berthier interposed. The emperor remained motionless, absorbed, and apparently insensible to all that passed. At length he broke silence, and dissolved the council by these words,—“It is well, sirs, I will decide.”

He decided to retreat, and by the road which led him most speedily from the enemy; but it cost him a dreadful effort to extort from himself an order so new to him. This effort was so painful, so bitterly repugnant to his pride, that during the inward strife it occasioned he lost the use of his senses. Those who attended upon him said, that the report of another skirmish with the Cossacks near Borowsk, some leagues

in the rear of the army, was the feeble but decisive shock which determined him upon this fatal course.

What is remarkable is, that he ordered this retreat towards the north, at the very moment when Kutusof and his Russians, weakened by the shock they had received at Malo-Iaroslavetz were retiring on the south.

## CHAPTER V.

DURING this same night the same anxiety had agitated the Russian camp. During the combat at Malo-Iaroslavetz, Kutusof was seen feeling his way to the field of battle, halting at every step, sounding the ground as if he was afraid it should give way under him, and waiting to have the corps which he sent to the relief of Doctorof successively extorted from him. He dared not place himself across Napoleon's road until the hour when general engagements are no longer to be feared.

It was then that Wilson, heated with the combat, hastened to him; Wilson, that active, enterprising Englishman, whom we had found in Egypt and Spain, and everywhere the determined foe of the French and of Napoleon. He was the representative of the allies in the Russian army; in the midst of Kutusof's power he was an independent man, an observer, and even a judge—infallible causes for aversion. His presence was odious to the old Russian, and as hatred never fails to beget hatred, they mutually detested each other.

Wilson reproached him with his inconceivable tardiness; five times in one single day did it cause them to miss of victory, as at Winkowo; he reminded him

of that engagement, which took place on the 18th of October. On that day, in fact, Murat was lost if Kutusof had warmly engaged the front of the French army while Beningsen turned their left wing. But whether it were from indifference and slowness, the natural defects of age, or whether, as some Russians affirmed, Kutusof was less the enemy of Napoleon than the rival of Beningsen, the old man attacked too languidly and too late, and desisted too soon.

Wilson continued, he remonstrated with him, he required him to give battle on the morrow, and, on his refusing, he exclaimed, "that the general was then determined to leave a free passage for Napoleon, to allow him to escape with the victory he had won. What an outcry of indignation would be raised in Petersburg, in London, and throughout Europe! Did he not already hear the murmurs of his troops?"

Kutusof replied with irritation, "that undoubtedly he would rather build a bridge of gold for the enemy than endanger his own army, and with it the fate of the empire. Was not Napoleon retreating? Why should they stop him, and force him to conquer? The climate would suffice for his destruction; of all the allies of Russia winter is the most certain and faithful; he was resolved to wait for its assistance: that the Russian army belonged to him, and should obey him in spite of the clamours of Wilson; Alexander, if rightly informed, would approve his conduct. What did England signify to him? did he fight for her? His duty as a Russian was before every other consideration; he desired the deliverance of Russia, and this would be effected without running the risk of another battle; as for the rest of Europe, he cared very little whether it were subjugated by France or by England."

Wilson was thus repulsed; nevertheless, Kutusof



enclosed together with the French army in the plain above Malo-Iaroslavetz, was compelled to present the most formidable appearance of preparation. On the 25th he drew up all his divisions, and posted seven hundred pieces of artillery. Throughout both the armies the most perfect conviction prevailed, that a final and decisive day was at hand. In this conviction Wilson himself shared. He remarked that the rear of the Russian lines rested upon a boggy ravine crossed by an insecure bridge. This was the only way of retreat; it was within sight of the enemy, and appeared to him impracticable; Kutusof, then, must conquer or perish, and the Englishman smiled at the hope of a decisive battle; whether its issue were fatal to Napoleon, or dangerous to Russia, it must be bloody, and England in either case must be the gainer.

Night being come, however, he rode along the ranks in restless anxiety; he rejoiced to hear Kutusof swear that he would at length fight; he exulted to see all the Russian generals preparing for a terrible conflict; Beningsen alone still doubted. Nevertheless, the Englishman, persuaded that the position would not allow them to retreat, lay down to rest till daybreak, when at about three o'clock in the morning he was awakened by an order for a general retreat. All his efforts were useless. Kutusof had determined to retreat towards the south, first to Gonczarewo, then to the other side of Kalouga, and already every thing was ready for his passage over the Oka.

It was at this same instant that Napoleon ordered his troops to retire towards the north, upon Mojaïsk. The two armies, mutually deceived by their advanced guards, thus turned their backs upon each other.

Wilson declared, "that on Kutusof's side the retreat was like a rout." Cavalry, artillery, waggons,

and battalions, flocked from all parts to the entrance of the bridge on the rear of the Russian army. There all these columns pressing from the right, the left and the centre, met, and were crowded together, and mingled into a mass so enormous, so condensed, that it lost all power of motion. Several hours elapsed before this passage could be disencumbered and cleared. A few shot thrown at random by Davoust fell in the midst of the tumult.

Napoleon had only to march upon this disorderly crowd. When the greatest struggle, that at Malo-laroslavetz, had already been made, when he had nothing now to do but to advance, he retreated. But such is war; nobody ever attempts or dares enough. One army knows not what the other is doing. The advanced posts are the exterior of these two great antagonist bodies, by them they impose upon each other. There is an abyss between them, even when within sight of each other.

Perhaps the emperor's want of prudence at Moscow produced his want of boldness and enterprise here; he was wearied; the two skirmishes with the Cossacks had disgusted him; he was affected at the state of his wounded, shocked and revolted by so many horrors; and, like a man extreme in his resolutions, when he could no longer hope for complete victory, he determined on a precipitate retreat.

From that moment he saw nothing but Paris, just as at setting out from Paris he had seen nothing but Moscow. It was on the 26th of October, that the fatal movement of our retreat commenced. Davoust, with twenty-five thousand men, formed the rear-guard. While he advanced a few steps, and without knowing it struck terror into the Russians, the main body, astonished at itself, turned its back on them.

The men marched with their eyes on the ground, ashamed and humbled. In the midst of them, their leader in gloomy silence seemed anxiously to measure his line of communications with the fortresses on the Vistula.

In a course of two hundred and fifty leagues, that river afforded him only two places of rest and refreshment. First, Smolensk, and then Minsk. These two cities were his grand depôts; immense magazines were collected in them. But Wittgenstein, stationary before Polotsk, threatened the left flank of the former, and Tchitchakof, who had already reached Bresklytowsky, the right flank of the latter. Wittgenstein's force was increased by the recruits, by the new corps which he daily received, and by the gradual falling off in St. Cyr's troops.

Napoleon, however, placed great dependance on the duke of Belluno, and his thirty-six thousand fresh troops. This corps had been at Smolensk ever since the beginning of September; he also reckoned upon the detachments which the depôts would furnish, upon the convalescent sick and wounded, and upon the stragglers rallied and formed again into marching battalions at Wilna. All of these would successively join the army, and would fill the vacancies made in the ranks by the sword, by famine, and by disease. He would then have time to recover that position on the Duna and the Borysthènes, where his presence, as he wished to have it believed, added to that of Victor, St. Cyr, and Macdonald, would keep Wittgenstein in check, stop the progress of Kutusof, and threaten Alexander in his second capital.

For these reasons he proclaimed, that he was going to take up a position on the Duna. But it was not upon that river and the Borysthènes that his thoughts,

rested. He was conscious that it would be impossible for his harassed and enfeebled army to keep possession of the space between the two rivers, and of the streams themselves, which the frost would soon render passable. He did not calculate upon a sea of snow, six feet in depth, which winter spreads over these regions, and soon converts into a solid mass; the whole country would then become one open road; and the enemy would penetrate into the spaces between his wooden cantonments, spread over a frontier of two hundred leagues, and would burn them.

If he had stopped there at first, as he proposed on his arrival at Witepsk, if he had kept together and refreshed his army, if Tormasof, Tchitchakof, and Hoertel, had been driven out of Volhynia, if he had raised a hundred thousand Cossacks in those rich provinces, his winter-quarters might indeed have been habitable. But now nothing was in readiness, and not only was his force insufficient to maintain himself there, but Tchitchakof, a hundred leagues in his rear, would still have it in his power to interrupt his communications with Germany and with France, and would menace his retreat. At Minsk, then, a hundred leagues beyond Smolensk, in a more enclosed position, behind the marshes of the Beresina, he must seek his winter-quarters, from which he is now divided by forty days' march.

But can he arrive there in time? He had reason to believe that he could. Dombrowski and his Poles posted, as a corps of observation round Bobruisk, were sufficient to keep Hoertel in check. Swartzenberg was victorious; he was at the head of a corps of forty-two thousand Austrians, Saxons, and Poles, which would be increased to more than fifty thousand by the arrival of Durutti and his French division from

Warsaw. He had pursued Tormasof to the banks of the Styr.

The Russian army of Moldavia had, it is true, joined the rest of the army of Volhynia, and Tchitchakof, an active and determined general, had taken the command of these fifty-five thousand men; the Austrian general had halted, and had even thought fit, on the 23rd of September, to retire behind the Bug; but he crossed this river again at Bresk-litowsky, and Napoleon was ignorant of all that had passed before.

At all events, unless there were treachery which it was too late to guard against, and which could only be prevented by a precipitate return, he might reasonably hope that Swartzenberg, Regnier, Durutti, Dombrowski, and twenty thousand men, stationed at Minsk, Slonim, Grodno and Wilna, that seventy thousand men, in short, would not allow sixty thousand Russians to seize his magazines and cut off his retreat.

## CHAPTER VI.

SUCH were the precarious conjectures to which Napoleon was reduced, when, on his arrival at Vereia, Mortier presented himself before him. But I perceive that, hurried along as we then were by the rapid succession of violent scenes and memorable events, my attention has been directed from a fact worthy of notice. On the 23rd of October, at half-past one in the morning, the air was shaken by a terrible explosion; the hostile armies, though grown too familiar to the strange and the terrible to be easily surprised, were for a moment astonished at it.

Mortier had obeyed his orders. The Kremlin ex-

isted no longer. Barrels of powder had been placed in all the halls of the palace of the Czars, and a hundred and eighty-three thousand pounds weight under the vaults of it. The marshal with eight thousand men remained upon this volcano, which a Russian shell might have blown up. He there covered the march of the army towards Kalouga, and the retreat of our various wagon-trains towards Mojaïsk.

Out of these eight thousand men, there were scarcely two thousand upon whom Mortier could rely; the rest, dismounted horsemen, soldiers of different ages and countries, without the tie of similar habits, of common recollections, or, in short, any thing that binds men together, formed a promiscuous gathering, rather than an organized body: their dispersion was fully to be expected.

Mortier was looked upon as a sacrificed man. The other generals, his companions in glory, had taken leave of him with tears in their eyes, and the emperor with this expression, "that he relied on the marshal's good fortune, but that, at all events, in war one must take one's share of the danger."

Mortier acquiesced without hesitation. His orders were to defend the Kremlin, and on his retreat to blow it up, and to set fire to the rest of the city. On the 21st of October, Napoleon sent him his last orders from the castle of Krasno-Pachra. After he had executed them, Mortier was to march in the direction of Vereia, and to form the rear-guard of the army.

In the letter containing these orders, Napoleon particularly recommended him to load the waggons of the young guard, of the dismounted cavalry, and, in short, all he could find with the men who were still in the hospitals. "The Romans," added he, "adjudged civic crowns to those who saved the life of a

citizen—the duke of Treviso will merit such a crown for every soldier he shall save. He must mount them upon his own horses, upon the horses of all his people. This is what Napoleon himself did at Saint Jean d'Acre. This measure is the more expedient, because as soon as the sick and wounded reach the army, horses and carriages will be found for them, which the consumption of provisions will then have set at liberty. The emperor hopes he shall have to testify his satisfaction to the duke of Treviso, for saving him five hundred men. He must begin by the officers, then the subaltern officers, and must give the preference to Frenchmen; that he must, therefore, assemble all the generals and officers under his command, and impress upon them the importance of this measure, and the merit they will acquire in the eyes of the emperor, by saving him five hundred men."

In proportion, however, as the main army retreated from Moscow, the Cossacks had penetrated into its suburbs, and Mortier had drawn his men around the Kremlin, as the last remains of life retires to the heart after death has seized upon the extremities. These cossacks formed the advanced guard of ten thousand Russians, commanded by Winzingerode.

This foreign general, inflamed by hatred against Napoleon, and wrought up by the desire of retaking Moscow, and of naturalizing himself in Russia by that signal exploit, dashed forward in advance of his own troops, he rapidly crossed the Georgian colony, rushed towards the Chinese town and the Kremlin, met the advanced posts, disregarded them, fell into an ambuscade, and finding himself taken in that very city which he came to take, he suddenly changed his game, waved his handkerchief in the air, and declared that he was sent with overtures.

He was conducted to the duke of Treviso; with the utmost audacity he claimed the rights of nations, which he affirmed were violated in his person. Mortier replied, "that a general-in-chief, who presented himself in such a manner, might be taken for a rash soldier but never for a negotiator, and that he must instantly surrender his sword." Upon this, the Russian general, seeing that it was in vain for him to attempt to impose upon the marshal, acquiesced, and confessed his imprudence.

At length, after a resistance of four days, the French abandoned this fatal city for ever. They carried away with them four hundred wounded, but before their retreat, they deposited in a secure and secret place, a train of very curious construction, which was already consuming by a slow fire; the progress this would make was calculated, the precise hour at which the fire would reach the immense heap of powder shut up in the foundations of this devoted palace was known.

Mortier retreated precipitately, but the moment he retired, rapacious Cossacks, and filthy boors, attracted by the desire of plunder, flocked together and approached the city: they listened, and emboldened by the apparent tranquillity which reigned in the fortress, they ventured to penetrate into it; they ascended the stairs, and already were their hands extended to grasp their booty, when in a moment all were destroyed, dismembered, thrown into the air with the walls they came to strip, and with thirty thousand muskets which had been left there; their mutilated limbs, mixed with fragments of the building, and with broken arms, fell far and wide in a frightful shower.

The earth trembled under Mortier's steps. Ten leagues farther on, at Feminskoi, the emperor heard this explosion, and with that tone of anger with



which he sometimes addressed Europe, he issued a proclamation the following day, dated from Borowsk, in which he said, "that the Kremlin, the arsenal, the magazines, all were destroyed; that this ancient citadel, coeval with the rise of the monarchy, this palace of the Czars, had ceased to exist. That Moscow was now only a heap of ruins, an impure and unwholesome dunghill, without either political or military importance. That he had left it to Russian robbers and beggars, and was marching upon Kutusof, to attack the right wing of that general, drive him back, and quietly regain the shores of the Duna, where he would fix his winter-quarters." Then fearing that he should appear to be retreating, he added "that he should thus have approached eighty leagues nearer Wilna and Petersburg, by which he should obtain the double advantage of being twenty days' march nearer to the means, and to the end." He thus tried to give his retreat the colour of an offensive march. He then declared "that he had refused to give orders for the destruction of the whole country he had abandoned, it was repugnant to his feelings thus to aggravate the miseries of the population. To punish one Russian incendiary, and a hundred criminals, who carry on war like Tartars, he would not ruin nine thousand land-owners, and leave a hundred thousand serfs, guiltless of all these atrocities, absolutely without resource or subsistence."

At that moment he was not soured by misfortune; in three days he was totally changed. After an encounter with Kutusof, he retreated by that same town to Borowsk, and the moment he passed through it, it was destroyed by his order. Thus every thing in his rear was for the future to be burnt. When conquering, he had preserved, retreating he would destroy, either

from necessity, as a means of distressing the enemy and impeding his march, his situation being one which rendered imperious all the extremities of warfare; or by way of reprisals, the terrible effect of a war of invasion, which justifies all possible means of defence and thus gives birth to equally desperate means of attack.

It must, however, be said, that Napoleon was not the aggressor in this horrible kind of warfare. On the 19th of October, Berthier wrote to Kutusof, to persuade him "to conduct hostilities in such a manner that they might not inflict upon the Muscovite empire any evils but those inseparable from a state of warfare—the devastation of Russia being as destructive to that empire, as it was afflicting to Napoleon." To which Kutusof replied, "that it was impossible for him to restrain the patriotism of the Russians." Thus, in fact, avowing the Tartar warfare which his militia carried on against us, and authorizing us in a manner to retaliate upon them.

The same fires consumed Vereia, where Mortier, with Winzingerode as his prisoner, had just rejoined the emperor. At the sight of this German general, all Napoleon's hidden griefs burst forth; his dejection turned to anger, and he vented upon this enemy the deep vexation which oppressed him. "Who are you?" cried he, folding his arms with vehemence, as if to hold and restrain himself, "who are you? A man without a country! You have always been my personal enemy! When I made war upon Austria, I found you in her ranks! Austria is become my ally, and now you have solicited to serve Russia. You have been one of the most active fomenters of the present war. Yet you were born in the states of the confederation of the Rhine, you are my subject. You are not an ordinary

enemy, you are a rebel. I have a right to have you tried! *Gendarmes d'élite*, seize that man!" The gendarmes remained motionless, like men accustomed to see these violent scenes end in nothing, and sure of obeying best by disobeying.

The emperor continued, "Do you see, sir, those fields laid waste, those villages in flames? Who is to be reproached with these disasters? Fifty adventurers like yourself, in the pay of England, who has scattered them over the Continent; but the burden of this war will fall upon those who provoked it. In six months I shall be at Petersburg, and I will require a strict account of this bullying."

Then turning to Winzingerode's aide-de-camp, who was taken prisoner with him, "As for you, count Narischkin, I have nothing to reproach you with, you are a Russian, you do your duty; but how could a man of one of the first families of Russia become aide-de-camp to a foreign mercenary? Be the aide-de-camp of a Russian general; that will be a much more honourable post." Until now the only reply that general Winzingerode could make to these violent expressions was by his attitude; it was as calm as his answer. He said "that the emperor Alexander was his benefactor, and the benefactor of his family; that he owed to him whatever he possessed; that gratitude had rendered him his subject; that he was at the post allotted to him by his benefactor, that he had consequently done his duty." Napoleon added some threats, but already in a subdued tone, and he confined himself to words; he had either vented all his anger in the first burst, or perhaps his only object was to frighten any of the Germans who might be tempted to desert him. In this light, at least, was his violence regarded by those about him. It gave disgust; no-

body regarded it; and every one pressed around the prisoner, to encourage and to comfort him. These attentions were continued till we reached Lithuania, where the Cossacks retook Winzingerode and his aide-de-camp. The emperor had affected to treat this young nobleman with great kindness, at the same time that he thundered against his general; which proves that there was calculation even in his anger.

## CHAPTER VII.

ON the 28th of October, we returned to Mojaïsk. The town was still filled with wounded. Some of them were carried away, others collected together and left, as at Moscow, to the generosity of the Russians. We were but a few wersts on the other side this city when winter set in. Thus, after a tremendous battle, and ten days' marching and counter-marching, the army had advanced only three days' march on its retreat. We had brought from Moscow only fifteen rations of meal per man. .

We were almost without provisions, and winter had overtaken us. Some of the men already sunk under these complicated evils. On the 26th of October, at the beginning of the retreat, the waggons of provisions, which the horses could drag no further, were burnt; orders were then given to set fire to every thing in our rear; this was effected by blowing up the caissons of powder, which could not be got along, in the houses. But, as we saw no more of the enemy, we seemed to be only setting out again on a toilsome journey, and Napoleon's spirits revived at finding himself once more on this well-known road, when, in

the evening, Davoust sent him a Russian chasseur whom he had taken prisoner. At first, he questioned him negligently, but by an extraordinary chance this Muscovite had some idea of roads, names, and distances; to one question, he replied, "that the whole Russian army was marching upon Wiazma, by way of Medyn." This aroused the emperor's attention; "Did Kutusof mean to outstrip him there, as he had done at Malo-Iaroslavetz, cut off his retreat upon Smolensk, as he had upon Kalouga, hem him in on this desert, without provisions, without shelter, and surrounded by an armed and hostile population?"

His first impulse led him to reject this idea with contempt; for, either from haughtiness or experience, he had accustomed himself not to expect in his adversaries the same skill and promptitude in seizing advantages, as he would have displayed in the same circumstances.

He had now, besides, a motive for appearing incredulous. His confidence was only affected; for it was evident that the Russian army had taken the route by Medyn—the very one Davoust had recommended for our retreat; and Davoust, either from pride or inadvertence, had not confided this alarming intelligence to his despatches. Napoleon feared the effect it might produce upon the minds of his men, and therefore treated it with assumed contempt; at the same time, however, he ordered his guard to march to Gjatzen the next day with the greatest expedition, and as long as daylight lasted. He wished to secure lodging and food for this chosen band, to gain more certain intelligence as to Kutusof's march, and to oppose it at that point.

But he had not summoned the weather to his council. It appeared to avenge itself for this neglect of

its power. Winter was at hand ; a few blasts of north-wind brought it upon us, armed with all its horrors, keen, biting, and resistless. We immediately felt, too, that it was indigenous, and we strangers in the country. Every thing underwent a change, the roads, the countenances of the men, and even their courage ; the army became gloomy, the march painful, consternation had seized on all hearts.

A few leagues from Mojaïsk we had to cross the Kalouga. It was scarcely more than a large brook ; two trees, as many piles, and a few planks were sufficient to make a secure passage over it, but such were the general disorder and carelessness, that the emperor's march was stopped. Several cannon, which the men tried to ford over, were sunk. It appeared as if every corps was marching at its own discretion, as if there was no *état-major*, no general order, no common tie, nothing to bind all these bodies of men together. And, in fact, the high rank of each of their chiefs rendered them too independent of each other. The emperor himself had become so great, that he was placed at an immeasurable distance from the details of his army, and Berthier, whose office it was to act as a sort of intermediary between him and his chiefs, was compelled to be too respectful, too fearful of offending these royal generals. He was, moreover, inadequate to his post. The emperor, stopped by so trifling an obstacle as a broken bridge, expressed his anger only by a gesture of dissatisfaction and contempt, to which Berthier replied, by an air of silent resignation. He had received no express order about this particular bridge, and therefore thought he was not in fault ; for Berthier was a faithful echo, a mirror, and nothing more. Always ready, always clear and precise, by night as well as by day, he reflected,

he repeated the emperor, but he added nothing, and what Napoleon forgot was forgotten without remedy or resource.

Having crossed the Kalouga, we were marching absorbed in gloomy thoughts, when several of us suddenly raising our eyes, uttered a cry of consternation. We saw the earth trodden down, naked, devastated; the trees cut down to within a few feet of the ground, and farther on broken hillocks, the largest of which presented the most hideous spectacle. It appeared like an extinguished and destroyed volcano. All around, the earth was covered with fragments of helmets and cuirasses, of broken drums and arms, tattered uniforms, and blood-stained standards. Upon this desolate spot lay thirty thousand half-devoured bodies. A few skeletons, which remained on the crumbling side of one of these hills, surmounted and looked down upon the whole. It seemed as if Death had there fixed his imperial seat. It was the horrible redoubt; the conquest and the grave of Caulaincourt. A long and melancholy murmur ran through our line: "It is the field of the great battle!" The emperor hurried by. Nobody stopped. We were pressed by cold, hunger, and the enemy: we could only turn our heads as we marched by, and cast a last sad glance on this vast tomb of so many companions in arms, vainly sacrificed, and whom we were now leaving for ever.

On this spot had we traced with our swords, and with our blood, one of the most important pages of our history. Some fragments still bore testimony to our exploits, but they would soon be effaced and annihilated. The traveller will then pass with indifference over this field, undistinguished from those around it; yet when he learns that it was the scene of that great battle, he will retrace his steps, he will examine it with

a long and curious gaze, he will eagerly fix the slightest peculiarities, the slightest accidents of it in his memory, and will doubtless exclaim, "What men! what a leader! and what a fate!" These are the men, who thirteen years before this memorable battle, tried to force their way southward into the East, through Egypt, and shattered their strength against her gates. After conquering Europe they returned by the north, to present themselves again upon the frontiers of Asia, again to wreck their fortunes. What then could drive them to adopt this wandering and adventurous life? They were not barbarians seeking more genial climates, more commodious habitations, more intoxicating amusements, or greater riches; on the contrary, they abounded in all these blessings, they revelled in all these delights, and they abandoned them to live without shelter, without food, to fall daily and successively, slain or mutilated. What fatal necessity impelled them? What, indeed, but confidence in a chief till then infallible; the ambition of finishing a great work gloriously begun; the intoxication of victory, and above all, that insatiable passion for glory, that powerful instinct which leads men to seek for immortality through death!

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE army moved in sedate and silent meditation past this fatal field, when one of the victims of that bloody day was perceived still living, and piercing the air with his cries. Some of the men ran to see who it was—it was a French soldier. His legs had both been broken in the battle; he had fallen among the dead and was forgotten. The body of a horse embowelled by a shell



was at first his shelter, and, for the last fifty days, the muddy water of the ravine into which he had rolled, and the putrid flesh of the dead around him were the only dressing to his wounds, the only support of his lingering existence. Those who say they discovered him, also affirm that they saved him.

● Farther on we saw the great abbey or hospital of Kolotskoi, a spectacle yet more horrible than the field of battle. At Borodino there was death, but there was also repose; there, at least, the struggle was over; at Kolotskoi it was continued. Death seemed to pursue those who had escaped him in the field; here he rioted and seized on his victims through every sense at once. Every thing that might avert or mitigate his stroke was wanting, except orders, which it was impossible to execute in these deserts, and which came from too high and remote a quarter, and passed through too many hands, to have any effect.

Nevertheless, in spite of cold, hunger, and the most complete want of necessities, the zeal and humanity of some of the surgeons, and some lingering hope, still supported a great number of wounded in this fetid abode. But when they saw the army repassing, when they found that they were to be abandoned, that they had nothing more to hope, the least feeble crawled to the threshold of the door, they lined the way, and held out their supplicating hands.

The emperor had just given orders that every carriage, of whatever description, should receive one of these unhappy sufferers, and that the weakest should, as in Moscow, be left under the protection of those of the Russian wounded prisoners, whom our cares had restored. He stopped to have this order executed, and it was by the fire of his abandoned caissons that he and most of his attendants warmed themselves.

Ever since the morning a number of explosions had proclaimed the numerous sacrifices of this kind which we had been obliged to make. During this halt, a most atrocious act was perpetrated. Several wounded had just been placed on the suttlers' carts. These wretches, who had filled their carts with the plunder of Moscow, murmured extremely at having to receive any addition to their load ; they were, however, compelled to take them, and they said no more. But very shortly after they set out, they slackened their pace, and suffered their column to pass them ; then, taking advantage of a few minutes' solitude, they threw all the unfortunate wretches committed to their care into ditches. Only one survived long enough to be picked up by the next carriages that passed ; he was a general officer. From him this atrocity became known. A shudder of horror ran through the column ; it even reached the emperor, for our sufferings were not as yet sufficiently acute and universal to extinguish all pity, and to concentrate all our sympathies and affections within ourselves.

On the evening of this long day's march, the imperial column approached Gjatx, when we were greatly surprised at finding on the road the bodies of Russians recently killed. We observed, that the head of every one of them was broken in the same manner, and the brains scattered around him. We knew that two thousand Russian prisoners were marching before us under a guard of Spaniards, Portuguese, and Poles. Some expressed indignation at this horrid spectacle, some approbation, and some displayed the most perfect indifference. Immediately round the emperor's person these various sentiments were repressed. Caulaincourt, however, could not contain himself. He exclaimed, " that this was atrocious cruelty ! This then

was the civilization we brought with us into Russia ! What would be the effect of such barbarity upon the enemy ? Did we not leave our wounded, and a crowd of prisoners in his hands ? Would he want opportunities of making the most horrible reprisals ?”

Napoleon preserved a gloomy silence, but the next day these murders had ceased. The wretched prisoners were then only left to die of hunger in the enclosures in which they were pounded at night like cattle. This was doubtless barbarity enough ; but what could be done with them ? Exchange them ? that the enemy refused. Release them ? they would have published throughout the country our entire destitution, and, joining with others, would have returned to pursue us with double fury. In this war of extermination, we could not preserve them without sacrificing ourselves. we were cruel through necessity. The great mistake was the having rushed into so dreadful a dilemma. Our soldiers who were taken prisoners were not treated more humanely in their march towards the interior of Russia, yet the enemy could not plead the same imperious necessity as an excuse.

We reached Gjatz at nightfall, but this first wintry day's march was a cruel one. The appearance of the field of battle, of the two hospitals whose wretched inmates we abandoned, the multitude of caissons committed to the flames, the slaughtered Russians, the excessive length of the route, the first touch of winter, every thing combined to render it gloomy and ominous ; our retreat became flight ; and Napoleon compelled to give way and to fly, was a spectacle new, and almost incredible to us all.

Many of our allies enjoyed this with that secret satisfaction which inferiors have in seeing those before whom they have bent, subdued and forced to yield in

their turn. They gave themselves up to the envy inspired by the sight of extraordinary good fortune, which is almost always abused, and which wounds the feeling of equality, one of the strongest implanted in the human heart. This malignant joy was however soon extinguished, and lost in the universal misery.

The wounded and suffering pride of Napoleon guessed at these thoughts. This was evident in the course of the day. Halting on the rugged and stiffened furrows of a field strewn with the fragments of the Russian and French armies, he seemed as if he sought to relieve himself from the weight of the intolerable responsibility of such a mass of misery by the violence of his expressions. He devoted the author of this war, which, indeed, he had always dreaded, to the execration of the whole world. "It was \* \* \* \* whom he thus accused, and it was that Russian minister in the pay of England who had fomented it. The traitor had misled both Alexander and himself." These words uttered in the presence of two of his generals were heard with silence imposed by a long and habitual respect, to which that which misfortune exacts from all generous minds was already added. The duke de Vicenza, however, too impatiently, perhaps, gave way to irritation; his gesture expressed both anger and incredulity, and he broke up this painful conversation by retiring abruptly.

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## CHAPTER IX.

THE emperor reached Wiazma, in two days' march from Gjatze. There he halted to wait for the arrival of prince Eugene and Davoust, and to reconnoitre the road from Medyn and Juknof, which at this place opens into the main road to Smolensk. This was the cross-road through which the Russian army was to pass. On the first of November, however, after waiting thirty-six hours, Napoleon saw no indications of their approach. He set off, vibrating between the hope that Kutusof had delayed, and the fear that he had left Wiazma on his right, and had gone on to cut off his retreat, at Dorogobouje, two days' march farther. To provide for all exigencies, he left Ney at Wiazma to collect the fourth corps, and to relieve Davoust, who he thought must be fatigued, as rear-guard.

He complained of Davoust's tardiness; he reproached him with being still five days' march behind, when he ought to have been only three; he thought the mind of that marshal was of too methodical a character to direct so irregular a march properly. The whole army, and especially the prince Eugene's corps, repeated these complaints. They said, "that in consequence of his excessive love of order, and his stubbornness, Davoust had been to be waited for ever since he left the abbey of Kolotskoi: that he had there done those miserable Cossacks the honour of retiring before them step by step, and in square battalions, just as if they had been Mamelukes: that Platof's cannon had taken effect from a distance on these dense masses, that then, indeed, the marshal opposed to them only thin lines, which soon formed anew, and a few light field pieces, whose first fire had been suf-

cient; but that these movements and the regular foraging parties, had consumed time, always precious on a retreat, and more particularly so in the midst of famine, through which the best manœuvrer was he who passed the quickest."

Davoust answered all these reproaches with his natural horror for every kind of disorder. This disposition had at first led him to endeavour to methodise our flight; finding that impossible, he then tried to obliterate the ruinous traces of it; he feared the shame and the danger of leaving to the enemy these proofs of our disastrous state. He added, "that those who censured him did not sufficiently consider the difficulties he had to contend with; that he had to pass through a country completely devastated; not a house, not a tree, but was burnt to the ground; that the destruction of every thing in their rear had not been left to him; the conflagration, the ruin, had preceded him. It seemed as if the existence of the rear-guard had been forgotten! Equally forgotten, doubtless, was the state of the road, covered with hoar-frost, beaten and trampled in by the steps of all who had preceded him; and those fords which they had rendered impassable, those bridges which they had broken and left unrepaired, in short all those traces of an army, in which every corps, when not in actual engagement, thought only of itself. Did they not know that the whole crowd of followers, deserted by the other corps, on horse, on foot, and in carriages, added to his difficulties, as in a diseased body all disorders fly to the part attacked? Every day he marched between these unhappy wretches and the Cossacks, driving the one, and driven by the other. Thus, for instance, he had found the swamps of Czarewo-Zaimieze, without a bridge, and strewn with baggage. This he had

snatched out of the mud in sight of the enemy, and so near them that their fires lighted his labours, and the noise of their drums was blended with his voice."

This marshal and his generals could not as yet endure to leave the enemy so many trophies, nor did they submit to this humiliation till after many vain struggles, and at the last extremity, to which they were reduced several times in one day.

The road was continually intersected by marshy hollows into which the waggons were precipitated down frozen declivities; they stuck in the hollows, and, in order to drag them out, it was necessary to climb the opposite slope by an icy road, on which the smooth worn shoes of the horses had no hold: they and their drivers fell every minute exhausted together. The famished soldiers immediately darted upon these fallen horses, and tore them to pieces. Over fires made of the fragments of the carriages these poor animals were dragging, they broiled the still bleeding flesh, which they eagerly devoured.

The artillery, a picked corps, and their officers all educated at the first school in the world, kept off these unhappy wretches, and ran to unharness their own calèches and their waggons, which they abandoned, that they might save the cannon. They harnessed their horses to them—they harnessed themselves. The cosacks, who saw this disaster from a distance, dared not approach; but with their light field-pieces mounted upon sledges they threw shot into the midst of the tumult which they thus increased.

The first corps had already lost ten thousand men. Nevertheless, with immense labour and privation, the viceroy and the prince of Eckmühl arrived within two leagues of Wiazma, on the 2nd of November. They might unquestionably have passed through the town

that same day, and have avoided a disastrous battle. It is affirmed that this was the course recommended by prince Eugene, but that Davoust thought his troops too much fatigued ; and that the viceroy, sacrificing himself to his duty, stopped to share a danger which he foresaw. On the other hand Davoust's generals assert that prince Eugene had already encamped, and could not resolve to order his soldiers to leave their fires, and the food they were just beginning to eat ; knowing with what labour and difficulty these were always procured. However this may be, during the deceitful calm of this night, the Russian advanced guard arrived from Malo-Iaroslavetz, where our retreat had put a stop to theirs ; it turned the two French corps and the corps of Poniatowski, passed their bivouacs, and posted its troops in order of battle on the left side of the road along the interval of two leagues which Davoust and Eugene had left between themselves and Wiazma.

Miloradowitch, who was called the Russian Murat, commanded this advanced guard. He was, according to the report of his countrymen, as indefatigable, daring and impetuous as that soldier-king ; of a stature as remarkable, and no less a favourite of fortune. He had never been wounded, though a crowd of officers and soldiers had been killed around him, and many horses under him. He despised the theory of war ; he even used some art in not following the rules of the art, and affected to surprise the enemy by unexpected strokes, which he was ever prompt in conceiving ; he disdained to prepare any thing, taking counsel of places and circumstances, and acting only on sudden inspiration. He was a general on the field alone, he was utterly devoid of forethought in the



regulation of affairs of any kind, whether public or private, a noted spendthrift, and, what is rare, at once prodigal and honest.

Such was the general, together with Platof and twenty thousand men, with whom we had to contend.

## CHAPTER X.

On the 3rd of November prince Eugene took the road to Wiazma, whither his baggage and artillery had gone before him, when the first dawn of day showed him at one view that on his left his retreat was threatened by an army, behind him his rear-guard cut off, and, on his right, the plain covered with stragglers, and scattered baggage-waggons flying under the enemy's lances ; at the same time he heard marshal Ney, who was to have come to his assistance, fighting for his own preservation, in the direction of Wiazma. This prince was not one of those generals who owe their promotion to favour, and who from want of experience are continually taken unprepared, and by surprise. He immediately saw both the evil and the remedy. He stopped, faced about, formed in line along the right of the main road, and kept in check within the plain the Russian columns, which tried to cut off his retreat through it.

Some of the foremost of the enemy's troops, turning the right of the Italians, had already established themselves upon one point, of which they kept possession, when Ney marched up one of his regiments from Wiazma, which attacked their rear and compelled them to retire.

At the same time Compans, one of Davoust's gene-

rals, joined his division to the Italian rear-guard : they formed into line, and whilst they fought together with the viceroy, Davoust moved rapidly with his column along their rear, and, as soon as he had cleared their flank, crossed the main road, and took up a position on the right of it, between Wiazma and the Russians. Prince Eugene abandoned to them the ground he had defended, and passed over to the other side of the road. The enemy then began to deploy before them, and tried to turn their wings.

By the success of this first movement, the French and Italian corps did not gain the power of continuing their retreat, but merely the possibility of defending it. They amounted to thirty thousand men, but Davoust's corps, which was the first, was in a state of great disorder. The hurry and precipitation of this movement, the surprise, the complicated misery, and above all the fatal example of a crowd of horsemen dismounted and disarmed, wandering in all directions, bewildered by terror, disorganized the whole corps.

The sight of their confusion encouraged the enemy. He believed they were routed. His artillery, superior in number, advanced at a gallop ; it took our lines obliquely and in flank, and mowed them down, whilst our own guns, which had already reached Wiazma, and were ordered back in haste, could scarcely be dragged along. Davoust and his generals were, however, still surrounded by their bravest and steadiest men. Many of these officers who had been wounded at Mosqua, were seen, one with his arm in a sling, another with his head covered with linen bandages, encouraging the firm, keeping together the doubting, throwing themselves upon the enemy's batteries, driving them back, and even seizing three of their field-pieces, thus astonishing both the enemy and our own deserters,

and checking the influence of bad example by an example of the most noble intrepidity. Miloradowitch now saw that his prey would escape, and sent to demand assistance ; it was Wilson again, always to be found where he could be most injurious to France, who went to summon Kutusof. He found the old marshal reposing with his whole army within hearing of the engagement. The ardent Wilson, as pressing as the circumstances, vainly tried to rouse him ; he could make no impression upon him. In a transport of indignation he called him traitor, he declared that he would send off one of his Englishmen to Petersburg, that moment, to denounce his treachery to the emperor and his allies.

This threat produced no effect upon Kutusof ; he remained stubbornly inactive ; whether it was that the frost of winter had joined its influence to that of age, and that his mind was enfeebled by the weight of infirmities under which his body laboured ; or whether, by another effect of old age, he had become prudent when he had scarcely any thing left to risk, and dilatory when he had no time to lose. He still professed to think, as at Malo-Iaroslavetz, that the Muscovite winter would alone destroy Napoleon, without any exertion of theirs ; that this conqueror of men would be best subdued by nature ; that they ought to leave to the climate the honour of the victory, and to the Russian sky its own vengeance.

Miloradowitch, thus left to himself, tried to break the French line of battle ; he could only penetrate it by his fire, but that made dreadful havoc. Eugene and Davoust were growing weak, and as they heard another battle on the rear of their right, they thought all the rest of the Russian army was hastening to Wiazma, by way of Juknof, and that Ney was defending the

outlet of that road. It was only an advanced guard; but the noise of this engagement in the rear of their own, and threatening their retreat, rendered them anxious. The fight had already lasted seven hours; the baggage-train must have had time to pass, and night was approaching; the French generals, therefore, began to retire. This retrograde movement increased the ardour of the enemy, and if it had not been for a memorable effort of the 25th, 57th, and 85th regiments, and the protection of a ravine, Davoust's corps would have been broken, turned on its right, and utterly destroyed. Prince Eugene, who was less warmly attacked, was enabled to make good his retreat through Wiazma more rapidly: but the Russians pursued him thither; they had got into the town, when Davoust, driven by twenty thousand men, and shattered by twenty-four pieces of artillery, endeavoured to pass in his turn. Morand's division was the first engaged in the town. He was marching without any suspicion of danger, believing the combat at an end, when the Russians, who were concealed by the winding of the streets, suddenly fell upon him. The surprise was complete, and the confusion great; nevertheless Morand rallied, encouraged his men, renewed the combat, and cut his way through the enemy.

Compans put an end to the affair. He brought up the march with his division. Feeling himself pressed upon by Miloradowitch's brave troops, he faced about, rushed himself upon the most furious, drove them back, and having thus made himself respected, he quietly concluded his retreat. This battle was glorious to the army individually, and its result disastrous to it collectively; there was a want of order and of unity of action. There would have been enough soldiers for conquest, had there not been too many leaders.

It was not till near two o'clock that the latter met to concert their future movements, and even these were executed without co-operation.

When, at length, the river, the town of Wiazma, the night, mutual fatigue, and the approach of marshal Ney had separated the enemy, the danger being for a time removed, and the bivouacs posted, we began to count our forces. We found several cannon broken, several baggage-waggons, and four thousand killed or wounded, wanting. A great many soldiers were dispersed. We had saved our honour; but the chasms in our ranks were immense. It was necessary to reduce our whole body, and form it again in a more compact manner, in order to give some coherence to what remained. Each regiment scarcely formed a battalion, each battalion a platoon. The soldiers had no longer their accustomed places, comrades, or officers. This melancholy reorganization was effected by the light of the burning of Wiazma, and accompanied the sound of the successive discharges of the artillery of Ney and Miloradowitch, whose hostilities were prolonged through the twofold darkness of night and the forest. Several times this remnant of brave troops thought they were attacked, and crawled to their arms. On the following morning when they returned to their ranks, they were astonished at the smallness of their numbers.

## CHAPTER XI.

NEVERTHELESS, the example of their chiefs, and the hope of finding rest, food, every thing, at Smolensk, kept up the men's spirits. Above all, they were cheered by the sight of a still brilliant sun—that uni-

versal source of life and hope, which seemed to belie and disown all the scenes of death and horror which surrounded us. But on the sixth of November, the sky underwent a total change. Its azure disappeared. The army marched through a cold mist; the vapour then became dense, and soon fell in a thick and heavy shower of large snow-flakes. It seemed as if the heavens were falling and joining with the earth and its inhabitants in one common league for our utter destruction.

Every thing was now confounded and undistinguishable; objects changed their appearance; we marched without knowing where we were; we saw nothing before us; obstacles seemed to grow around us. Whilst the soldiers tried to force their way through the whirlwinds of sleet, the snow, drifted by the storm, collected in heaps in every cavity—its surface concealed those unexpected chasms which treacherously yawned beneath their feet. There they were ingulphed, and the weakest rose no more. Those who followed turned round, but the wind drove in their faces not only the falling snow, but that which it raised, in fierce and confounding eddies, from the earth. It seemed to oppose their inarch with obstinate fury. The Muscovite winter, under this new form, attacked them in every part: it penetrated through their light clothing and their ragged shoes. Their wet clothes froze upon them, this covering of ice pierced their bodies, and stiffened all their limbs. A cutting and violent wind stopped their breath, or seized upon it at the moment it was exhaled and converted it into icicles, which hung upon their beards round their mouths. The unhappy men crawled on, with trembling limbs, and chattering teeth, until the snow collecting round their feet in masses, like stones, some scattered fragment, a branch

of a tree, or the body of one of their companions made them stagger and fall. Their cries, their groans were vain; soon the snow covered them and small hillocks marked where they fell;—such was their sepulture! The road was filled with these undulations, like a place of burial—the most intrepid, the most apathetic, were affected; they hurried past with averted eyes. But before them, around them—all is snow; the eye loses itself in this boundless and melancholy uniformity: the imagination is confounded, the horizon seems one vast winding-sheet, in which nature is inshrouding the whole army. The only objects which come out from the blank expanse, are a few gloomy pines, funereal trees, with their sad green, and the motionless erectness of their black trunks; their mournful character completes the picture of universal gloom and desolation formed by an army dying in the midst of a scene so wild, so death-like.

Even their arms, which, offensive as far as Malo-Iaroslavetz, had since been only defensive, now turned against themselves. They seemed a weight insupportable for their benumbed limbs. In their frequent falls, they slipped out of their hands, and were broken or lost in the snow. If the men rose again, their arms at least were gone: they did not throw them away, cold and hunger seized upon them. Many others had their fingers frozen on the musket they still grasped—it prevented their using the motion necessary to keep up some remains of life and heat in their hands. We soon met a number of men of every corps, sometimes alone, sometimes in parties. They had not deserted their standards from cowardice; cold and inanition alone had detached them from their columns. In this general and individual struggle, they had been separated from each other, and they were now dis-

armed, subdued, defenceless, without a leader, and obeying nothing but the pressing instinct of self-preservation. Most of them, attracted by the sight of some cross-paths, dispersed themselves over the fields, in the hope of finding bread and a shelter for the night; but on our former passage through the country every thing had been laid waste for seven or eight leagues on each side the high road; they met nothing but Cossacks, and an armed population who surrounded them, wounded and stripped them, and left them with ferocious laughs to expire naked upon the snow.

These people, who had been stirred up by Alexander and Kutusof, and who had not then learned how nobly to avenge a country they had been unable to defend, hovered on each side of the army under cover of the woods. They brought all whom they had not despatched with their pikes and hatchets, and left them to perish on the fatal and destructive main road.

Then came the night—a night of sixteen hours. But, on this universal covering of snow, we knew not where to stop, where to sit, where to lie, where to find a few roots for food, or dry sticks to light our fires.. At length fatigue, darkness, and reiterated orders stopped those whom their moral and physical strength, and the efforts of their officers, had kept together. We tried to establish ourselves for the night, but the incessant activity of the storm scattered every preparation for the bivouacs.

The pines, covered with frost and sleet, obstinately resisted the flames; the snow fell in showers from their branches; above our heads its flakes seemed to increase in size and in quantity; beneath our feet it melted under the efforts of the soldiers to obtain fires;



it extinguished at once these fires, our strength and our courage.

When, at length, the fire triumphed, and we saw the rising flame, officers and soldiers crowded around it to prepare their wretched meal. It consisted of lean and bloody pieces of flesh, torn from the carcasses of worn-out horses, and, for a very small number, a few spoonfuls of rye-flour mixed with snow-water.

The next morning circles of stiffened corpses marked the bivouacs; around them were scattered the carcasses of several thousand horses.

From this day we began to depend less upon each other. In an army so vivacious, so susceptible of every impression, so far advanced in civilization as to reason upon every act of their superiors, disorder was quickly introduced; want of steadiness, and want of discipline, quickly spread among men whose imaginations were unrestrained for evil as well as for good. From that time, at every bivouac, at every difficult pass, indeed at every moment, some portion broke from the organized corps, and fell into disorder. There were some, however, who resisted this strong contagion of insubordination and despondency. These were the officers, the subaltern-officers, and some soldiers whom nothing could detach from their duty. These were extraordinary men; they kept up each other's spirits by repeating the name of Smolensk, which they knew they were approaching, and looked forward to as the end of their sufferings.

Thus, from the moment of that deluge of snow, and the intense cold by which it was accompanied, every man, whether officer or soldier, lost or retained his strength of mind, according to his natural character, his age, and his temperament. The one of our leaders

who had hitherto been esteemed the most rigorous disciplinarian, now appeared unequal to the emergency. Thrown out of all his established notions of order, method, and regularity, he was struck with despair at the sight of the general confusion, he was the first to think that all was lost, and therefore, the most ready to abandon all.

Nothing remarkable happened in the imperial column between Gjatzen and Mikalewska, a village between Dorogobouje and Smolensk, except that it was found necessary to throw the spoils of Moscow into the lake of Semlewo. Cannon, gothic armour, the ornaments of the Kremlin, and the cross of the Great Iwan were sunk; trophies, glory, all those acquisitions, to which we had sacrificed every thing, became burdensome to us; we could no longer care for what might render our lives honourable and illustrious, we could think only of their preservation. In this frightful shipwreck, the army, like a mighty vessel tossed by the most tremendous tempest, threw into this sea of snow and ice, whatever could encumber or retard its progress.

## CHAPTER XII.

On the 3rd and 4th of November, Napoleon stopped at Slawkowo. This interval of rest, and the shame of appearing to fly, heated his imagination. He was heard to dictate orders according to which his rear-guard, by a feigned disorderly retreat, was to draw the Russians into an ambuscade, which he was to direct in person; but this vain project vanished, with the excited state of mind which had given it birth. On the 5th, he slept at Dorogobouje. He found there the

blushed with shame at the sight of the first cannon, which we found abandoned before Dorogobouje.

Here the marshal halted; after a horrible night, in which the snow, the wind, and famine had driven most of the soldiers from the fires, the morning, always so impatiently expected on a bivouac, had brought a storm, the enemy, and the sight of a general desertion. In vain had he fought in person at the head of his few remaining officers and soldiers; he was compelled to retreat precipitately behind the Dnieper. Such was the intelligence he sent the emperor.

He wished him to know the exact state of affairs. His aide-de-camp, colonel Dalbignac, was intrusted to say, that "from the time they left Malo-Iaroslavetz, the first movement of retreat had disheartened and humbled the army, composed as it was of men who had never given way before an enemy; that the affair of Wiazma had shaken their resolution; and that, lastly, this deluge of snow, and the intensity of the cold, had completed their disorganization. That, as a multitude of officers had lost every thing, platoons, battalions, regiments, and even divisions, they had joined the scattered and wandering masses. They were seen in troops of generals, colonels, and officers of all ranks, mixed with common soldiers, marching at random, sometimes with one column, sometimes with another; that as order could not be maintained within sight of such disorder, the example had infected even those veteran regiments which had served through the whole revolutionary war. That the best soldiers were heard in their ranks, asking each other why they alone were to fight to secure the retreat of others, and what sort of encouragement it was to them to hear the cries of despair, which issued from all the neighbouring woods,

in which the great train of wounded, who had been uselessly dragged from Moscow, were left to perish? Such then was the fate which awaited them. What had they to gain by keeping to their colours? Incessant labour and fighting by day, and famine by night; no shelter, bivouacs more murderous than battles, where hunger and cold drove away sleep, or, if fatigue overpowered them for a moment, the repose which should restore, destroyed them. In short, the eagle was no longer the signal of protection, but of death.

“Why then should they cling around it, only to fall in battalions, in masses? It was better to disperse, and since nothing remained but flight, to accomplish that with what speed they might. The best men would not then be the victims, cowards would no longer devour all that remained on the road.” In short, the aide-de-camp was to lay before the emperor all the horror of his general’s situation. Ney disclaimed all responsibility.

But Napoleon saw enough around him to guess at the rest. Deserters were continually passing him; he felt that nothing remained but to sacrifice the army piece by piece, beginning at the extremities in order to save the head. When, therefore, the aide-de-camp was going to speak, he abruptly interrupted him with these words, “Colonel, I don’t ask you for these details!” Dalbignac was silent: he felt that under circumstances so disastrous, and now irremediable, every man stood in need of his whole strength of body and mind; and that the emperor feared the effect of complaints, which could only weaken him who indulged in, and him who listened to them. He was struck with Napoleon’s deportment; it was that which he maintained during the whole retreat; grave, silent, and

resigned: it was that of a man suffering less in body than others, but much more in mind, and submitting to his misfortune.

At this moment, general Charpentier sent him some waggons laden with provisions from Smolensk. Bessieres wanted to take possession of them, but the emperor sent them on immediately to the prince of the Mosqua, saying, "that those who fought should eat before the rest." At the same time he sent to beg that Ney would try to defend himself long enough to allow him some time at Smolensk, where the army would have food and rest, and would be reorganized.

But if this hope kept some to their duty, many others abandoned every thing to hurry on to the promised end of their sufferings. Ney saw that there must be a victim, and that he was devoted: he acquiesced without hesitation, and stood forward to receive the whole weight of a danger mighty as his courage: from that moment he no longer made it a point of honour to save his baggage, nor even his artillery, which he surrendered to the climate alone. Some of his guns were stopped by a bend of the Borysthenes, it was impossible to get them up its sloping and icy banks; he sacrificed them without hesitation, passed this obstacle, faced about, and forced the hostile river which crossed his route, to serve as a defence.

The Russians, meanwhile, advanced under cover of a wood, and of our deserted carriages; from these they fired upon Ney's soldiers: half of them, whose benumbed hands were frozen by their icy muskets, were disheartened; they threw down their arms, excusing themselves by their weakness of the preceding day; fleeing because they had fled; which they would formerly have thought impossible. Ney rushed into the midst of them, snatched arms from the hands of one

man, and led them back to the fire which he himself renewed; exposing his life like a common soldier, with a musket in his hand, as in those days when he was neither husband, nor father, nor rich, nor powerful, nor honoured; as if, in short, he had every thing to gain, now that he had every thing to lose. But while he fought like a soldier, he did not cease to be a general; he took advantage of the ground, rested upon a height, and covered his troops with a palisaded house. His generals and colonels, among whom he particularly noticed Fezenzac, seconded him vigorously, and the enemy who expected to pursue, was compelled to fall back.

By this action, Ney gave four and twenty hours respite to the army; Napoleon took advantage of this time to pass on to Smolensk. On the next, and all the following days, he displayed the same heroism. Between Wiazma and Smolensk, he fought ten entire days.

### CHAPTER XIII.

On the 13th of November he reached Smolensk, which he was not to enter till the following day, and faced about to keep the enemy in check, when suddenly the heights under which he was going to post his left were covered with a crowd of deserters. In their wild terror, these wretches threw themselves down and rolled to where he stood upon the frozen snow, along which they left traces of their blood. A band of Cossacks, which soon appeared in the midst of them, explained the cause of the confusion. The marshal, having dispersed this band of enemies, to his astonishment perceived behind them the army of Italy return-

ing without baggage or artillery. Platof had kept them, as it were, besieged from the time they left Dorogobouje. Prince Eugene had left the high road from that town, and had taken the road in the direction of Witepsk, which two months before had led him to Smolensk. The Wop, which he then crossed, was but a brook, he had scarcely observed it; it was now swelled into a river. It flowed over a bed of mud enclosed between two precipitous banks. It was necessary to cut through its hard and frozen banks, and to pull down the neighbouring houses during the night, that a bridge might be built of the materials. But those who had taken shelter in them opposed the execution of this order. The viceroy, who was more esteemed than feared, was not obeyed: the pontoniers gave way, and when the day reappeared, and with it the Cossacks, the bridge, after being twice broken, was abandoned.

Five or six thousand soldiers, who still kept in their ranks, twice as many stragglers, sick and wounded, more than a hundred cannon, and a throng of carriages waited to pass the river. They covered a league of ground. They tried a ford across the pieces of ice which the torrent carried along. The foremost of the guns reached the other shore, but the water kept rising every moment, while the ford deepened under the trampling of the horses. A waggon stuck fast; others became entangled with it, and the ford was totally blocked up.

Meanwhile, the day wore away, and the men exhausted themselves in useless efforts; hunger, cold, and the Cossacks became pressing, and the viceroy was at length compelled to order the whole of his artillery and baggage-train to be abandoned. Now began a scene of desolation—the possessors of what the wag-

gons contained had hardly time to select a few of the most necessary articles, and to put them upon horses, when a crowd of soldiers rushed upon them, and more especially upon the officers' carriages; they broke, they destroyed every thing, thus wreaking their vengeance for their own misery and privations upon these articles of wealth and luxury, and depriving the Cossacks, who were distant spectators, of their expected booty. Most of them seized greedily upon the provisions. For a few handfuls of flour, they rejected embroidered garments, pictures, ornaments of every kind, and gilded bronzes. The evening presented a strange sight,—these riches of Paris and Moscow, these luxuries of two of the greatest cities in the world, lying scattered and neglected on a wild and desert tract of snow. At the same time most of the artillery-men in despair spiked their guns and threw away their powder. Others laid a train which they carried on under the caissons left at a distance in the rear of our baggage. They waited till the most rapacious of the Cossacks had come up, and as soon as they saw a number of them hotly engaged in pillage, they threw the flame of a bivouac on this powder. The fire ran and reached the end in an instant; the caissons blew up, the shells burst, and those of the Cossacks who were not destroyed, fled in terror.

A few hundred men who were still called the fourteenth division were opposed to these hordes, and were sufficient to keep them in check till the following day. All the rest, soldiers, commissaries, women and children, sick and wounded, driven on by the enemy's fire, crowded to the banks of the torrent. But, at the sight of the swollen waters, of the sharp masses of ice floating upon them; of the necessity of increasing the tortures from cold, which they already found intole-



nable, by plunging into these icy waves, all hesitated. An Italian, colonel Delfanti, was the first to rush in. The soldiers then moved on, and the crowd followed. The weakest, the most irresolute, and the most avaricious staid behind. Those who could not resolve to part from their booty, and to forget Fortune as she had forgotten them, were surprised in their hesitation. The next day, savage Cossacks, not content with all the riches scattered around them, greedily seized upon the dirty and ragged clothes of their unfortunate prisoners ; they stripped them and bound them together in droves ; and made them march naked over the snow, beating them with the handles of their lances.

The army of Italy, thus dismantled, drenched in the waters of the Wop, without food, without shelter, passed the night upon the snow, near a village in which the generals attempted in vain to lodge. Their soldiers besieged the wooden huts in which they hoped to find a shelter. The unfortunate men taking advantage of the darkness which prevented their recognising their officers, or being recognised by them, rushed in desperate swarms upon every habitation. They tore away doors, windows, and even the timber of the roofs ; they cared little for forcing others, be they who they might, to bivouac like themselves. It was in vain that their generals drove them back ; even the men of the royal and imperial guard bore blows without complaint, and without revolt ; but they did not desist ; throughout the army similar scenes took place every night. They said nothing, but they clung with determined activity around these wooden walls which they pulled to pieces on every side at once, and which their officers were at length compelled to abandon for fear of being crushed under their ruins. They exhibited a singular mixture of perseverance in

their design, and respect for the violent displeasure of their generals.

When the fires were well lighted, they passed the night in drying themselves, while their cries and imprecations were mingled with the groans of those who had just crossed the torrent, or who rolled from the top of its banks, and were lost among its masses of ice. It is a fact disgraceful to the enemy, that in spite of these disasters, and within sight of so rich a spoil, a few hundred men who were left on the other side of the Wop, at a distance of half a league from the viceroy, kept in check not only the courage, but the rapacity of Platof's Cossacks. Perhaps the Hetman thought that he was secure of the destruction of the viceroy for the morrow. In fact all his measures were so well taken, that at the moment when the army of Italy, after an anxious and disorderly march, caught sight of Doukhowtchina, a town which was still entire, and joyfully hastened to take shelter in it, several thousand Cossacks issued from it with cannon, and suddenly arrested their progress. At the same time Platof rushed, with all his hordes, to the attack of his rear-guard and his two flanks. Several eye-witnesses affirm that, it was now a scene of complete tumult and disorder; that stragglers, women, and valets, crowded before each other, and rushed across the ranks; that in short, for some minutes this unfortunate army was but a shapeless mass, a vile mob, which confounded and obstructed its own movements. All appeared to be lost. But the prince's coolness, and the exertions of his generals saved them. The best men extricated themselves, and formed into ranks. They advanced firing a few muskets, and the enemy who had every thing on his side but courage, the only advantage that

remained to us, opened their ranks, and retired before a mere show of resistance.

The prince's army took the place which the enemy had just occupied in the town, out of which he retreated to bivouac, and to prepare similar surprises up to the gates of Smolensk. The disastrous affair of the Wop had determined the prince not to separate his army from that of the emperor. The Cossacks took courage and surrounded the fourteenth division. When prince Eugene wished to go to their assistance, the soldiers and their officers, benumbed by a cold twenty degrees below freezing point, which the wind rendered still more piercing, remained stretched on the warm ashes of their fires. In vain did he show them their companions surrounded, the enemy approaching, and the shot and bullets already falling about them; they persisted in not rising, and declared that they had rather die than support any longer such intense sufferings. Even the *védettes* had quitted their posts. Prince Eugene, however, succeeded in saving his rear-guard.

On returning with it towards Smolensk, his stragglers were driven upon Ney's soldiers. The latter caught the infection of their terrors, and all rushed towards the Dnieper; they crowded together at the entrance to the bridge, without attempting to defend themselves, when the enemy was stopped by a charge of the fourth regiment.

Fezenzac, the youthful colonel of this regiment, found means to breathe new spirit into men almost motionless with cold. Here, as in every case where energy is required, the superiority of the sentiments of the soul over the sensations of the body was conspicuous: every physical sensation led them to despondency and flight; nature urged it with her hundred

persuasive tongues, yet a few words of honour were all that was required to obtain the most heroic self-devotion. The soldiers of the 4th ran furiously upon the enemy, up the mountain of snow and ice, upon which he was posted, and in the teeth of the hurricane of the north. They had all against them. Ney himself was obliged to moderate them. A reproach from their colonel had wrought this change. These private soldiers rushed upon death, urged by fear of disgrace, by that instinct which renders a man despicable to himself without courage—by habit and thirst for glory. Yet how inappropriate does glory, that splendid word, seem to their obscure situation ! What is the glory of a soldier who dies without witnesses, who is neither praised, blamed, nor regretted, beyond his own company ? but every man's circle is sufficient to himself ; a small society contains and excites as many passions as a great one. The proportions of the bodies are different, but they are composed of the same elements, animated by the same principle, and the looks and presence of a platoon afford as strong a stimulus to a private as those of an army do to a general.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

At length the army once more caught sight of Smolensk ; the soldiers approached the town so often held out to cheer their desponding spirits. They pointed it out to each other. There was that promised land in which their famine would, doubtless, be exchanged for abundance, their fatigue for rest, where their bivouacs under a temperature of nineteen degrees below freezing point would be forgotten in warm

houses. There they would enjoy a restoring sleep ; they would repair their clothes ; they would receive shoes and clothing adapted to the climate. At the sight of the town all but the picked corps, a few of the common soldiers, and the skeletons of veteran regiments left their ranks and rushed forward. Thousands of men, most of them without arms, covered both the steep banks of the Borysthenes ; they pressed forward in a mass towards the lofty walls and gates of the city ; but their tumultuous crowd, their haggard countenances, blackened with dust and smoke, their tattered uniforms, the incongruous dresses by which they had supplied the loss of their own clothes, in a word, their strange and hideous aspect, and their frightful eagerness, terrified those within the walls. They thought that if they admitted the irruption of this crowd, maddened by hunger, the city would be one scene of pillage. The gates were therefore closed against them.

It was hoped also that this act of severity would compel them to rally. A horrible struggle between order and disorder now took place in the remnant of this unhappy army. It was in vain that some prayed, wept, entreated ; in vain they threatened and endeavoured to break in the gates ; in vain they fell dying at the feet of their comrades, who were ordered to drive them back : all were inexorable ; they were compelled to wait for the arrival of the first troop which was still under command and in order. It consisted of the old and the young guard. The stragglers were only allowed to follow them ; they and the other corps who had been successively arriving from the 8th to the 14th, thought that their entrance was delayed only to allow more rest and more provisions to the guards. Their sufferings rendered them unjust ;

they cursed them, " must they then be always sacrificed to this privileged class ? to that vain foppery which was never seen foremost except at reviews, at fêtes, and distributions ? was the army never to have any thing but their leavings ? and must even these be withheld until they were gorged." They might have been told that by endeavouring to save all, all must have been lost ; that one corps, at least, must be preserved entire, and that the preference must be given to that which in a final struggle could make the most powerful effort.

At length, however, the unfortunate men were in this long desired Smolensk ; they left the banks of the Borysthenes strewn with the dying bodies of the weakest among them ; impatience, and many hours of tedious expectation had worn out the small remains of their strength. They left others in the same condition on the icy steep which they had to climb in order to reach the upper city. The remainder ran to the magazines, and, even there, some expired in the act of besieging the doors whence they were repulsed. " Who were they ?" they were asked, " of what corps ? how were they to be recognised ? Those who were employed to distribute the provisions were accountable for them, they were to deliver them to none but authorized officers, bringing receipts for which they were to exchange the rations committed to their charge ; those who now presented themselves had no officers, and knew not where their regiments were." Two thirds of the army were in this state. The unhappy men then dispersed themselves about the streets, having no longer any hope but in pillage. But in every quarter skeletons of horses from which every particle of flesh had been carefully removed, proclaimed a famine ; the doors and windows had been broken or

torn from the houses to feed the fires of the bivouacs ; they found no shelter ; no preparation for winter quarters ; no wood ; the sick and the wounded remained in the streets on the waggons which had conveyed them. Still, still they were on that fatal main road, which now passed under an empty name ; it was but a fresh bivouac amidst deceitful ruins, yet colder than the forests they had left. Then, alone, did these stragglers try to collect around their colours ; they returned to them for a moment to find food, but all the bread that had been baked had just been distributed, there was neither biscuit nor meat left. They received some rye-flour, some dry vegetables, and brandy. Incredible exertions were necessary to hinder the detachments of the different corps from killing each other at the doors of the magazines ; when, at last, these wretched provisions were given out, the soldiers refused to carry them to their regiments ; they darted upon the sacks, snatched out a few handfuls of flour, and ran to devour it secretly in a corner. It was the same with the brandy. The next day the houses were found filled with dead bodies.

In short this fatal Smolensk which the army had looked forward to as the term of its sufferings, might be said only to mark the commencement of them. A boundless prospect of misery opened before us, and for forty days we must march under its iron pressure. Some, already overwhelmed with the present evils, sunk under the contemplation of the horrors in store for us. Some struggled against their fate, they determined to trust to nobody, to obey nobody but themselves, and to preserve their lives at any price. From that time, according as they found themselves stronger or weaker, they took from their dying comrades, by violence or by fraud, their food, their clothes and even the gold

with which they had filled their knapsacks in the place of provisions. These wretches whom despair had converted into robbers, then threw away their arms to save their infamous booty; they took advantage of the common misery, of their obscure station, of their uniform which could no longer be recognised, of night, in short of every kind of obscurity, all favourable to cowardice and to crime. If some accounts already before the public had not exaggerated these horrors, I should have withheld details so disgusting, for such atrocities were rare, and justice was executed on the most guilty.

The emperor arrived on the 9th of November, in the midst of this scene of desolation. He shut himself up in one of the houses of the new square, nor did he leave it until the 14th, when he continued his retreat. He had reckoned upon finding fifteen days' provisions and forage for an army of a hundred thousand men; he did not find enough for half that number, and it consisted solely of flour, rice, and brandy. There was no meat at all. He was heard furiously upbraiding one of the men charged with provisioning the army. The commissary only obtained his life by a long and abject entreaty on his knees, at Napoleon's feet. Perhaps his reasons did more for him than his supplications. "When he arrived," he said, "the gangs of stragglers which the army had left behind it, had filled Smolensk with terror and ruin. The famine was as dreadful there as on the road. When a little order had been re-established, the Jews were the only people who had offered to furnish the provisions which were wanted. Some Lithuanian nobles had afterwards been induced by better motives to give them some assistance. At length, the head of the long train of provisions collected in Germany, had made its appear-



ance. They were drawn in certain carriages, which alone had been able to cross the Lithuanian sands, but they had not brought more than two hundred quintals of flour and of rice ; several hundred head of German and Italian cattle had arrived with them. Meanwhile the heaps of dead bodies in the houses, courts, and gardens, infected the air with their effluvia. The dead destroyed the living. The officers of the commissariat, as well as many military men, were affected, some had become imbecile, they wept or stared on the ground with a haggard, motionless eye. Some had their hair standing on end, stiff, or twisted into ropes, and, at length, in the midst of a torrent of imprecations, a fit of horrible convulsions, or of laughter yet more horrible, they had expired.

"It had likewise been necessary to kill the greater number of the bullocks from Germany and Italy immediately. These animals could no longer walk or eat. Their eyes were sunk, glazed, and motionless. They stood to be killed without attempting to avoid the blow. Other misfortunes followed ; several wagon-trains were intercepted, and stores captured ; a drove of eight hundred bullocks was taken at Krasnoe." He added, "that some allowance must also be made for the great number of detachments, which had passed through Smolensk ; for the halt marshal Victor had made, with twenty-eight thousand men, and about fifteen thousand sick ; for the multitude of posts and marauders whom the rising of the people and the approach of the enemy had driven into the town. All these had lived upon the stores ; nearly sixty thousand rations had been given out per day ; lastly, that provisions and cattle had been driven as far as Mojaisk in the direction of Moscow, and as far as Elnia'in that of Kalouga."

Several of these allegations were well-founded. Other magazines were still on the road from Smolensk to Minsk and Wilna. These two cities were much more central points than Smolensk. The towns on the Vistula would then have formed the commencement of the line of communication. The sum of the provisions distributed through the extent of country was incalculable, the efforts necessary for their transport gigantic, and the result almost nothing. They were quite inadequate to the immensity over which they were dispersed.

Thus do great expeditions crumble down under their own weight. The limits of human power had been outstepped: the genius of Napoleon, trying to rise superior to time, distance, and climate, was, as it were, lost in infinite space; however vast was its measure, it had got beyond it.

It must, however, be said, that he was driven on by necessity. He did not deceive himself as to the state of difficulty and destitution, in which he would be placed. Alexander alone had deceived him. Accustomed to triumph over every thing by the terror of his name, and by the astonishment inspired by his daring impetuosity, he had risked his army, himself, and his fortune, upon the chance of Alexander's first movement. He was still the same man as in Egypt, at Marengo, at Ulm, at Esslingen; he was Fernando Cortez; he was the Macedonian burning his ships, and persisting in spite of his soldiers in penetrating into unexplored Asia; he was Cæsar, risking his whole fortunes in one frail bark.

## BOOK X.

## CHAPTER I.

THE capture of Winkowo, and the unexpected attack made by Kutusof in front of Moscow had been merely sparks from an extensive conflagration. On the same day and the same hour, the whole of Russia was acting on the offensive. The general plan of the Russians was suddenly developed; and the view of the map became perfectly alarming.

On the 18th of October, at the very moment when the cannon of Kutusof were destroying Napoleon's hopes of glory and peace, Wittgenstein, a hundred leagues in rear of his left, had precipitated himself upon Polotsk; Tchitchakof, in the rear of his right, two hundred leagues farther, had availed himself of his superiority over Schwartzenberg; and both of them, one descending from the north, the other rising from the south, had exerted themselves to form a junction near Borizof.

This was the most difficult pass of our retreat, and these two armies were already touching upon it, while Napoleon was separated from it by twelve marches, the rigours of winter, famine, and the great Russian army.

At Smolensk, the danger of Minsk was only suspected, but some officers who had been present at the

capture of Polotsk furnished the details of it, which were listened to with deep attention and interest.

After the action of the 18th of August, which procured for St. Cyr the rank of marshal, that general remained on the Russian bank of the Duna, in possession of Polotsk, and an intrenched camp before it. This camp demonstrated with what facility the whole army might have wintered on the frontiers of Lithuania. Its barracks, constructed by our soldiers, were more roomy than the houses of the Russian peasants, and equally warm. They formed handsome military villages, well intrenched, and effectually protected both from winter and from the enemy.

During two months the war between the two armies had been a mere affair of partisans. The object of the French in it was to extend their range into the country, in order to secure a sufficient supply of provisions; that of the Russians to deprive and cut them off from such supplies. This petty warfare had been carried on completely to the advantage of the Russians, as our troops were totally ignorant of the geography of the country, the language of the people, and even the names of the places to which they ventured to extend their excursions, and were incessantly betrayed by the inhabitants, and even by their guides.

These checks, together with famine and disease, had reduced the troops of St. Cyr to one half of their first amount; while a constant influx of recruits had doubled those of Wittgenstein. About the middle of October the Russian army in this quarter amounted to fifty-two thousand men, and ours to seventeen thousand. In this number we must include the sixth corps, or the Bavarians, who had been reduced from twenty-two thousand to eighteen hundred, and two thousand cavalry at that period absent. St. Cyr

finding himself destitute of forage, and much annoyed by the enemy's attempts on his flanks, had just despatched them to a considerable distance up the right bank of the river, with instructions then to return on the left, for the double object of procuring subsistence for themselves and relieving him from annoyance and apprehension.

For St. Cyr was fearful of being turned on the right by Wittgenstein, and on the left by Steinheil who was advancing with two divisions of the army of Finland which had recently arrived at Riga. There is extant an urgent letter from this marshal to Macdonald, in which he requested and pressed him to oppose the march of these Russians, who had to defile in front of his army, and to send him a reinforcement of fifteen thousand men; or if he objected to detach any part of his forces, to come in person with that number of men, and assume the command himself. He, in the same letter, disclosed to Macdonald his whole system of attack and defence. But Macdonald did not conceive himself justified in making so important a movement without express orders. He distrusted Yorck, whom he, perhaps, suspected of intending to deliver up to the Russians his park of siege-artillery. He replied, that to defend that was his first and most indispensable duty; and he declined quitting his station.

In this situation the Russians became more daring and adventurous every day; and at length, on the 17th of October, the advanced posts of St. Cyr were driven in upon his camp, and Wittgenstein gained possession of all the outlets of the woods by which Polotsk is surrounded. He threatened us with a battle, which he thought we should not venture to accept.

The French marshal, receiving no instructions from the emperor, had delayed too long to intrench him-

self. His works were little more than marked out, not sufficiently proceeded in to cover their defenders, but just enough so to point out the part which they were to defend with the utmost obstinacy. Their left, resting on the Duna, and protected by batteries placed on the left bank of the river, was the strongest. Their right was feeble. The Polota, a stream flowing into the Duna, separated them.

Wittgenstein ordered Yathwil to menace the side which was easily accessible, and on the 18th presented himself against the other; at first with some degree of temerity, for two French squadrons, the only ones which St. Cyr had retained, overthrew the head of his column, captured its artillery, and, it is said, took the commander himself prisoner, but without knowing him to be such, so that they abandoned him as an insignificant prize when they were compelled by numbers to fall back.

At this crisis the Russians, dashing out of their woods, disclosed the whole of their force, and attacked St. Cyr with fury, who was himself struck by a ball from one of their first discharges. He nevertheless remained in the midst of his troops, although no longer able to stand, and under the necessity of being carried. The fury of Wittgenstein's onset on this part was sustained during the whole of the day. The redoubts which Maisons defended were taken possession of and lost no less than seven times. Seven times did Wittgenstein consider the victory as his own. At length, St. Cyr disheartened and repulsed him. Legrand and Maisons remained masters of the intrenchments, which were absolutely steeped in Russian blood.

But while on the right every thing appeared to have been gained, on the left every thing seemed to be

lost: this reverse was owing to the fiery impetuosity of some Swiss and Croats. Their emulation had never before this occasion been called into action. Too eager to prove themselves worthy of constituting a part of the grand army, they acted with rashness. Being inconsiderately placed in advance of their position in order to draw on Yacthwil towards it, instead of abandoning to him a spot of ground which had been prepared for his destruction, they rushed forward against the masses of his force, and were overwhelmed by numbers. The French artillery were precluded from firing, in consequence of their own troops being thus intermingled with the enemy, and of course became completely useless, and our allies were discomfited and driven back to Polotsk.

It was then that the batteries on the left bank of the Duna discovered the enemy and were enabled to open their fire upon them; but instead of stopping their march, they only hastened it. Yacthwil's Russians, in order to avoid our balls, precipitated themselves with the utmost speed into the ravine of the Pilota, along which they were proceeding to penetrate into the city, when three pieces of cannon hastily posted in a line with the head of their column, and a last and grand effort made by the Swiss, completely repulsed them. At five o'clock the action was over; the Russians had withdrawn from every side into their woods, and fourteen thousand men had conquered a body of them consisting of fifty thousand.

The night passed tranquilly with all; not excepting St. Cyr himself. His cavalry had misinformed him. They assured him that no enemy had passed the Duna, either above or below his position; which was incorrect, as Steinheil and thirteen thousand Russians had crossed that river at Dryssa, and reascended it on the

left bank, in order to take the marshal in his rear, and shut him up in Polotsk, between themselves, the Duna, and Wittgenstein.

On the 19th, Wittgenstein was observed with his troops all under arms, and drawing up in regular order for an attack, for which, nevertheless, he seemed to want resolution to give the signal. St. Cyr, however, was not misled by these indications. He concluded that so powerful, and at the same time so enterprising an enemy could not be daunted by his feeble intrenchments, and strongly suspected therefore that he must be waiting the result of some important manœuvre as the signal for a formidable co-operation, which manœuvre could take place only in his rear.

In fact, about ten in the morning an aide-de-camp arrived at full speed from the opposite side of the river, to inform him that another hostile army, that under Steinheil, was rapidly ascending the Lithuanian bank, and driving before it the French cavalry. He came to require instant assistance, without which, this new army would soon reach the rear of the camp and surround it. The rumour of this conflict at once filled the ranks of Wittgenstein with transport, and the French camp with dismay.

The position of the latter had certainly now become most dreadfully critical. These brave men were now actually shut in by a force three times equal to their own, on a town built of wood, and against a great river which had only one bridge for retreat, the passage of which was menaced by another army!

In vain was it that St. Cyr then weakened himself still more by detaching three regiments, whose march he concealed from Wittgenstein, to the opposite bank, with a view to check the advance of Steinheil, whose



artillery was now heard more distinctly every moment announcing his rapid approach to Polotsk. Already were the batteries which from the left bank protected the French camp changing their direction in order to turn that fire against this new enemy. On seeing this, shouts of joy burst from Wittgenstein's whole line, still, however, that general continued inactive. Before he began to perform his part in the contest, he seemed to consider it not sufficient to hear Steinheil, and appeared determined to wait for his actual appearance.

In the mean time, all St. Cyr's generals pressed around him in a state of great consternation, and urged him to give instant orders for a retreat, which in a very short time would be impossible. St. Cyr refused this: he perceived that the fifty thousand Russians in arms, and as it were at bay in front of him, were only waiting for the first retrograde movement he should make, to dart instantly upon him to his destruction; and he remained firm and motionless in his position, availing himself of their inconceivable stagnation, and still hoping that Polotsk might be wrapped in the shades of night before Steinheil would arrive.

He has since acknowledged that never in the course of his life did he experience such a state of dreadful anxiety. A thousand times in the course of those three hours of awful expectation did he look at his watch, and glance his eye at the declining sun, as if he had been able to hasten its progress.

At length, when Steinheil was within only half an hour's march of Polotsk, when only a few slight efforts remained for him to appear in the plain, reach the bridge, and bar St. Cyr from the only avenue by which he could have escaped from Wittgenstein, he halted. In a short time, a thick fog, which the French were dis-

posed to consider as an interposition of heaven in their favour, anticipated the darkness of night and concealed the three armies from each other's view.

St. Cyr waited only for the arrival of that moment. Already were his numerous artillery crossing the river in silence, and his divisions ready to commence the same cautious retreat, when the soldiers of Legrand, either from the effect of habit, or from their reluctance to abandon their camp untouched to the enemy, set fire to it. The two other divisions conceived that this was a signal agreed upon, and in an instant the whole line was in flames.

This conflagration proclaimed their movement; and immediately all the batteries of Wittgenstein began to play, his columns were hurried forward in pursuit, and his shells soon set fire to the town. It was necessary to contest every foot of ground there, with the flames which threw a light on the struggle equal to that of day. The retreat was nevertheless effected in good order; much blood was shed on both sides; and the Russian eagle did not regain possession of Polotsk till the 20th of October, at four in the morning.

As fortune happily would have it, Steinheil slept undisturbed amidst all the noise occasioned by the encounter, although even the shouts of the Russians were tremendously loud. He did not assist Wittgenstein in the whole course of that important night more than that general assisted him on the preceding day. When Wittgenstein had completed all he could do on the right bank, when the bridge of Polotsk was destroyed, in short, when St. Cyr with his whole force was safe on the left bank, where he was equal to Steinheil, then it was that the latter began to rouse himself. But De Wrede and six thousand Bavarians fell upon him during his first movement, drove him

several leagues back into the woods from which he was endeavouring to debouch, and killed or took prisoners two thousand of his men.

## CHAPTER II.

THESE three affairs were truly glorious. Wittgenstein had been repulsed, Steinheil defeated, and ten thousand Russian troops, and six generals killed or wounded. But St. Cyr himself had been wounded; the offensive attitude had been lost, and joy, triumph, and abundance reigned in the enemy's camp, while our own exhibited only sadness and destitution. We were retreating. The army was in want of a chief; and De Wrede made pretensions to supply that want himself. But the French generals declined any kind of concert with that Bavarian, alleging his well-known character, and conceiving that to act in union with him was impossible. Their pretensions completely clashed with each other. St. Cyr, therefore, notwithstanding his personally disabled state, was compelled to retain the command of the two corps himself.

The marshal then ordered the retreat to be followed up towards Smoliany, by every road which could be found leading to it. He himself remained with the centre, and regulated the march of the different columns by successive intervals; a system of retreat directly opposite to that followed by Napoleon.

The object of St. Cyr was to obtain more provisions, to march with more freedom, co-operation, and union, in short, to avoid the confusion generally attending large columns, when men, cannon, and baggage are crowded together in one road. His plan

was successful. Ten thousand French, Swiss, and Croats, with fifty thousand Russians in close pursuit of them, retreated in four columns, with slowness and deliberation, without suffering themselves to be broken through, and preventing Wittgenstein and Steinheil from effecting more than three marches in eight days.

By thus retiring towards the south, they covered the right flank of the road from Orcha to Borizof, by which the emperor was returning from Moscow. One column only, that of the left, received any check. It was that of de Wrede and his fifteen hundred Bavarians, augmented by a brigade of French cavalry, which he retained contrary to the express orders of St. Cyr. He was marching at the time under no direction but his own, for his wounded pride could no longer brook obedience. The affair, however, cost him all his baggage. He afterwards, under pretence of being more serviceable to the common cause by covering the line of operations from Wilna to Witepsk which the emperor had abandoned, separated himself from the second corps, withdrew by Klubokoé to Vileïka, and became completely useless.

The discontent of de Wrede may be dated from the 19th of August. He entertained a notion that he had a great share in obtaining the victory of the 18th, and that in the report sent off the following day his name had not been distinguished with due honour. From that time his disgust increased more and more, inflamed by this bitter recollection, by his own complaints, and by a brother who was said to be serving in the Austrian army. It is likewise added, that, as the retreat drew towards a close, the Saxon general Thielmann drew him into his projects for the liberation of Germany.

This defection was scarcely felt. The duke of Belluno, and twenty-five thousand men hastened forward from Smolensk. On the 30th of October he joined St. Cyr before Smoliany, at the very moment when Wittgenstein, unacquainted with that junction and relying on his superiority, had crossed the Lukolmlia, and, with only defiles in his rear, imprudently attacked our advanced posts. Nothing was required to effect his complete destruction but a simultaneous effort of these two French corps. The soldiers and generals of the sixth corps were inspired with the most lively ardour. But when victory was in their hearts, and, conceiving it fully before their eyes, they expected the signal for battle, Victor gave the signal for retreat.

It was never known whether this singular act of prudence, which was deemed peculiarly unseasonable, arose from want of confidence in a country which he now beheld for the first time, or in soldiers whom he had never put to the test. It is possible that he might think it his duty not to risk a battle, the loss of which, it must be admitted, would have involved that of the grand army and its chief.

After falling back behind the Lukolmlia and defending himself there the whole of the day, he availed himself of the night to gain Siunno. The Russian general then became aware of the danger of his situation. So highly critical was it, that he turned our retrograde movement, and the discouragement and dejection which naturally accompanied it, to no other account than his own extrication.

The officers who communicated these details, added that, from that moment, Wittgenstein had thought of nothing but of retaking Witepsk and keeping on his defence. Probably he considered it too rash a measure

to cross the Berezina at its sources in order to join Tchitchakof; for an unauthenticated report had begun to be circulated, which threatened us with the march of that army of the south upon Minsk and Borizof, and with the defection of Schwartzenberg.

It was at Mikalewska, on the 6th of November, the ill-omened day on which Napoleon first heard of the conspiracy of Mallet, that he was informed also of the junction of the second and ninth corps and of the disadvantageous action of Czazniki. He was highly irritated, and sent orders to the duke of Belluno to drive Wittgenstein instantly behind the Duna, as the safety of the army absolutely depended upon it. He did not conceal from the marshal that he had reached Smolensk with a much harassed army, and a cavalry totally dismounted.

Thus it was evident that the days of our success were over. Disastrous intelligence flowed in from all quarters. On one side the loss of Polotsk, the Duna, and Witepsk, and Wittgenstein only four days' march from Borizof; on the other, near Elnia, Baraguay-d'Hilliers completely defeated. That general had suffered the brigade Augereau to be taken prisoners, and lost several magazines, together with the possession of the Elnia road, by which Kutusof might now get before us to Krasnoe, as he did, in a former case, to Wiazma.

At the same time, a hundred leagues in advance of us, Schwartzenberg wrote to inform the emperor that he was covering Warsaw, which in fact implied that he was leaving uncovered Minsk and Borizof, the magazine, the retreat of the grand army, and that perhaps the emperor of Austria was about to deliver his son-in-law into the power of Russia.

At the same moment, in our rear, and immediately

around us, prince Eugene was conquered by the Wop ; the draught horses which had been kept ready for us at Smolensk were devoured by the soldiers ; those of Mortier carried off while foraging ; and the droves of cattle collected at Krasnoe captured : in addition to which, dreadful maladies had made their appearance in the army, and the era of conspiracies appeared to have returned at Paris. In short every thing seemed to join in overwhelming Napoleon.

Every day the returns which he received of the state of his corps might be considered as so many bulletins of the dying. They shewed him the reduction of the army which had conquered Moscow from a hundred and eighty thousand men to seventy-five thousand only still capable of duty. Against this assemblage of calamities he could oppose nothing but a passive resistance, an unshaken firmness. His countenance remained unaltered ; he changed nothing in his former habits ; nothing in the form of his orders. Whoever read them would conceive that he felt himself still the commander of several armies. He did not even hasten forward his march. He merely manifested some irritation at the prudence of marshal Victor, repeating his order for him to attack Wittgenstein, and remove the danger which now threatened his retreat. With respect to Baraguay-d'Hilliers, who had been just accused by an officer, he summoned him before him, and sent him to Berlin, where, broken down by the fatigues and difficulties of the retreat, and sinking under the weight of the charge brought against him, he soon after expired, without having an opportunity of defending his conduct.

The unshaken firmness thus manifested by Napoleon was the only state of mind adapted to so great a

man, and to so irreparable a fortune. But what particularly excited surprise was, that he suffered fortune to wrest from him every thing, rather than sacrifice a part, in order to preserve the remainder. It was without his orders that the different chiefs burnt their baggage, and destroyed their artillery: he only permitted it. If he actually did issue any instructions of such a description, they were on some very extraordinary occasions almost forced from him. He seemed bent on avoiding as much as possible whatever might be considered an acknowledgment of his defeat. He possibly conceived that he should thus attract respect to his misfortunes, and by the inflexibility of his conduct exhibit to those under him the only proper example for a commander to give, that of unshaken, immoveable courage: or his conduct might perhaps proceed merely from the pride produced in men by long and uninterrupted success, and which naturally tends to precipitate their fall.

Smolensk, however, injurious and fatal as it was in two instances to the French army, was a place of repose for some individuals. During the suspension here granted to their sufferings, they could not help asking each other, "How it could possibly have happened that at Moscow every thing had been forgotten? Why had so much useless baggage been allowed? Why had so many already died of cold and hunger under the burden of knapsacks loaded with gold instead of provisions and clothing? and more especially, whether two and thirty days of rest had not been long enough to prepare for the cavalry and draught horses' frost-shoes, to render their march so much more secure and rapid?"

"In that case, we should not have lost the very



finest of our men at Wiazma, at the Wop, at the Dnieper, and indeed along the whole of the route; and in short, Kutusof, Wittgenstein, and possibly also Tchitchakof, would not have had time to prepare for us still more severe and fatal calamities.

“But why, even if Napoleon himself neglected to order such a precaution, why was it not ordered by the chiefs of the army, all of them kings, princes, and marshals? Had winter not been foreseen in Russia? Had Napoleon, who well knew the good practical sense of his soldiers, in this instance relied too much upon it? Had the recollection of the campaign in Poland during a winter scarcely more rigorous than that of our own climate deceived and deluded him, as well as a brilliant sun, whose continuance during the whole of the month of October had astonished even the Russians themselves? What giddy thoughtlessness must have possessed the army as well as its chief? On what was it that either of them relied? For even if the realization of our hopes of peace at Moscow had burst upon our transported minds, we should still have been under the necessity of returning, and yet nothing was prepared even for a return in peace and amity!”

The greater number could explain this universal infatuation only by a reference to their own thoughtlessness and carelessness, and to the circumstance that in armies as in despotic states it is the business of one to think for the whole; that individual therefore was responsible; and calamity, which authorises distrust, led every one freely to pronounce him blamable. It already began to be remarked respecting what was denominated so serious a fault, so nearly inconceivable a forgetfulness, committed by a mind of such activity and comprehension, during a stay so continued and so

leisurely, that it indicated not a little of that spirit of error which the poet designates as the

“Fatal forerunner of the fall of kings.”

Napoleon had now been five days at Smolensk. It was known that Ney had received orders to make his arrival there as late as possible, and Eugene to remain two days at Doukhowtchina. “It was not, therefore, any necessity for waiting for the army of Italy which detained him! To what then could this stagnation be imputed, when famine, disease, and winter, and three hostile armies were around us?”

“While we had plunged into the heart of this Russian colossus, his arms had been still extended towards the Baltic and the Black seas. Would he not exert these arms with all their energy at such a crisis as the present, when, instead of having inflicted a mortal wound on him, we were so severely wounded ourselves? Had not the fatal moment now arrived in which this colossus would grasp us in those menacing arms? Was it possible to imagine that they had been bound or paralyzed by opposing against them Austrians in the south and Prussians in the north? It was far more probable that the intermingling of these dangerous allies among the French and Poles had tended to render the latter useless!”

“But, without investigating too remotely the causes for alarm, was the emperor ignorant of the exquisite gratification he afforded the Russians on occasion of his exposing himself three months before to so severe a shock at Smolensk, instead of marching as he ought towards Elnia, where he would have cut off the enemy from his capital? And now when the tide of war had returned to those places, would the Russians, who were so much more at liberty in their

movements than we were, imitate so injudicious an example? Would they keep in our rear, when they had it in their power to place themselves in our front and block up our retreat?

“ Did it hurt Napoleon's pride to suppose that the attack of the Russians could be more daring than his own? But were the circumstances the same? To the Russians during their retreat every thing had been favourable, while in ours every thing was the reverse. Did not the capture of Augereau and his brigade upon this route sufficiently demonstrate the character and danger of it? What more ought to have been done in Smolensk, consumed and desolated as it was, than to snatch a fresh supply of provisions and hasten forward?

“ But undoubtedly the emperor imagined that by dating from that city for five successive days he should give to his actual rout the appearance of a leisurely and glorious retreat! It was for this reason that he had just ordered the destruction of the city's towers, resolved, according to his own statement, not to be again stopped by its walls; as if he contemplated a return to that city, when it was impossible to say whether we should be able to get out of it!

“ Could it be thought by any one that his object was to give time for the artillery-men to frost-shoe the horses? but how was it possible to expect any description of hard labour from artisans extenuated by famine and arduous marches; from those wretched beings who found the whole day insufficient for obtaining and preparing food; whose forges were either abandoned or spoiled; and who, moreover, wanted even the materials requisite for so extensive and arduous an undertaking?

“ But perhaps the emperor's intention had been to

allow him time for pushing on before him, both for their own safety, and also that they might not embarrass the ranks of his army, the encumbering multitude of soldiers who had become useless, for rallying the strongest and best disposed, and for reorganizing the army in general? But how could any one conceive it practicable to communicate orders to men so widely dispersed, to rally them without lodgings or rations to bivouacs, or to reorganize corps of dying men, which had nothing now left to keep them together, and would fall to pieces at the slightest touch."

Such were the observations of the officers by whom Napoleon was immediately surrounded, or rather their private reflections: for their zeal and attachment still continued firm and unbroken the two remaining years of Napoleon's power, in the midst of the most overwhelming calamities, and in the general revolt of nations.

The emperor, however, made one attempt which was not entirely without effect. This was the rallying under one chief the whole of the remaining cavalry. But out of thirty-seven thousand horsemen who were present at the passage of the Niemen only eight hundred now remained mounted. Napoleon conferred the command on Latour-Maubourg; and, whether in consequence of the general fatigue, or the general esteem, no one objected to the appointment.

The new commander accepted the honour, or rather the burden, without joy and without reluctance. His character had in it something peculiar. He was always prompt without being obtrusive, was at once tranquil and active, and was remarkably strict in his morals, at the same time always appearing natural and unostentatious. His intercourse with mankind was characterized by simplicity, and sincerity; and he

attached glory to actions, and not to words. In the midst of boundless disorder, he moved onward in his course with steadiness and self-control, and, what is not a little honourable to the age, he attained as high and as early distinctions as any others.

This feeble reorganization, the distribution of some provisions and the pillage of the remainder, the rest obtained by the emperor and his guard, the destruction of a part of his artillery and baggage, which at least prevented their adding to the resources of the enemy, and the despatch of a great number of orders, constituted nearly all the advantages which were derived from this disastrous stay at Smolensk. As to the rest, all the evils which had been foreseen actually took place. A few hundreds of men were rallied, but that only for an instant. The explosion of our mines scarcely did more than blow a few bricks from the walls, and on the very last day only served to drive from the city those stragglers whom it had been previously impossible to put in motion.

A number of men overcome by weakness and despondence, many women, and some thousands of sick and wounded, were abandoned. Although the news of the disaster of Augereau near Elnia had made it evident that Kutusof, now in his turn in hot pursuit, did not confine himself exclusively to the high road, and that, from Wiazma, he was marching directly by Elnia upon Krasnoe; and notwithstanding it might have been most clearly and decisively foreseen that our forces would have to cut their way through those of the enemy, yet it was not till the 14th of November that the grand army, or rather a body consisting of only thirty-six thousand effective men, began their departure.

The old and the young guard had at this time no

more than nine thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry; Davoust and the first corps had from eight to nine thousand men; Ney and the third corps from five to six thousand; Prince Eugene and the army of Italy, five thousand; Poniatowski, eight hundred; Junot and the Westphalians, seven hundred; Latour Maubourg with the remains of the cavalry, fifteen hundred; to which might be added a thousand light cavalry, and five hundred dismounted horsemen, who had with some difficulty been formed into one corps.

This army had left Moscow a hundred thousand strong, and in twenty-five days been thus reduced to thirty-six thousand. The artillery had already lost three hundred and fifty cannon; and yet these feeble remains were still kept divided into eight armies, encumbered with sixty thousand unarmed stragglers, and a long train of cannon and baggage.

It is impossible to say whether it was this embarrassment of men and carriages, or, what is more probable, a delusive sense of security that induced the emperor to order that the marshals should leave the place only in succession, each staying one full day after the preceding one. The fact, however, was, that himself, Eugene, Davoust, and Ney, all left the place in this manner, one after another. Ney was not to quit before the 16th or 17th. He had orders to make his men saw off the trunnions of the pieces which he left behind him and bury them, to destroy the ammunition, to push before him all the stragglers, and to blow up the towers of the city walls.

In the meantime Kutusof was waiting for us at only a few leagues distance, and prepared to attack and overthrow our dreadfully reduced and now disconnected corps, as they successively came up.

## CHAPTER III.

ON the 14th of November, at four o'clock in the morning, the imperial column, at length, quitted Smolensk. Its march was still firm and decided, but silent and solemn as night, still and gloomy as the scenes of nature in the midst of which it was now urging its way.

This silence was interrupted only by the sounds of whips lashing forward the horses, and by short and vehement ejaculations and curses, when, on reaching the ravines which impeded their advance, men and horses, and cannon rolled one over another in darkness down their steep and icy declivities. This first day they advanced five leagues. The artillery of the guard, in accomplishing this task, occupied two-and-twenty hours.

This first column, however, arrived without any great loss of men at Korythnia, which Junot had passed with his corps of Westphalians, now reduced to seven hundred men. An advanced guard had been pushed on to Krasnoe. Some of the wounded and disbanded men had nearly reached Lyadi. Korythnia is five leagues from Smolensk; Krasnoe five leagues from Korythnia; Liady four leagues from Krasnoe. From Korythnia to Krasnoe, two leagues on the right of the high road, flows the Boristhenes.

On the height of Korythnia, another road, that from Elnia to Krasnoe, approaches the high road. On that very day Kutusof was advancing along this Elnia and Krasnoe road, covering the whole of it with ninety thousand men; his march was nearly parallel with that of Napoleon but he passed the emperor, and by

cross roads sent forward different advanced guards to cut off our retreat.

One of the advanced guards, under the command, it was said, of Ostermann, made its appearance just at the same time as the emperor at Korythnia, and was repulsed.

A second posted itself at the distance of three leagues in advance of us, towards Merlino and Nikoulina, behind a ravine which lined the left side of our route, and there lying in ambush to fall on the flank of our retreat, awaited our passage. This body was commanded by Miloradowitch, and consisted of twenty thousand men.

A third at the same time reached Krasnoe, which it surprised during the night, but from which it was driven by Sebastiani, who had just arrived there. And a fourth, pushed on still farther, had advanced between Krasnoe and Lyadi, and carried off on the high road several generals and other military who were marching either quite alone or in small parties.

At the same time Kutusof, with the main body of his army, was marching on, and stationed himself behind these advanced guards, and within reach of all of them, glorying in the success of his manœuvres, which, however, his own dilatoriness would have defeated but for the assistance of our carelessness ; for it was, in fact, a battle of faults, in which, those on our side, being the most serious and important, had very nearly led to our destruction. After making these arrangements, the Russian general might well conceive the French army to be completely in his power, but in the event we were saved. Kutusof was wanting to himself at the very moment of action : his energy was not equal to his wisdom, and the infirmi-



ties of age made him execute ill, and only in half-measures, what its experience had skilfully combined.

While all these hostile bodies were stationing themselves about him, Napoleon continued tranquilly reposing in a wretched habitation, the only one remaining of the village of Korythnia, and appeared either not to be aware of, or to despise, those movements of men, arms, and horses, by which he was on all sides surrounded: at least, he despatched no orders to the three corps which were still at Smolensk to hasten their departure; and he waited for daylight to begin his march himself.

His column advanced without precaution: it was preceded by a great multitude of marauders, who were eagerly pressing on to reach Krasnoe, when, at the distance of about two leagues from that town, a file of Cossacks, stationed from the heights on our left completely across the high road, suddenly intercepted them. They instantly halted in consternation. They had expected nothing of the kind; and they at first imagined that their hostile destiny had traced on the snow, which then covered the ground, that long, black, and motionless line which they now saw between themselves and Europe as the fatal barrier to all their hopes.

Some of them, stupified by misery, gazing intently towards their country, and persisting mechanically in proceeding in that direction, would listen to no warning, and were ready to throw themselves in their infatuation into the enemy's hands: the rest formed themselves into irregular platoons; and both parties stood for a short time hesitating and examining each other. A few officers, however, hastened up and imparted some portion of order to these disbanded

troops, and seven or eight riflemen, whom they then launched against the enemy, soon penetrated the obstacle which had occasioned so much alarm.

The French were smiling at the audacity of such a vain demonstration, when, suddenly, the fire of a battery burst upon them from the heights on the left. Its balls traversed the road; and at the same moment, thirty squadrons of horse were seen on the same side threatening the Westphalian corps, which was advancing towards the spot, but of which its chief, from the agitation and confusion of his mind, neglected to make any disposition.

A wounded officer, however, totally unknown to this body of Germans, and who was present by mere chance, with a voice expressive of high indignation, took upon himself the command. They obeyed him, as did also their chief. In the urgent danger of the moment the conventional differences of rank vanished. The really superior man having appeared became a rallying point to the multitude, who quickly formed around him, and among whom he could perceive the chief himself, silent, speechless, confounded, and receiving with docility the impulse thus given, and practically acknowledging the superiority which, when the danger was over, he contested, but for the assumption of which he never sought, as too frequently happens, to obtain revenge.

This wounded officer was Excelmans! In this action he performed the parts of commander, officer, soldier, and even cannoneer, for he seized on a piece which had been abandoned by our troops to the enemy, loaded it, pointed it, and made it once more serviceable against him. With respect to the chief of the Westphalians, after this campaign, his melancholy and premature end led to the presumption, that the dread-

ful fatigues he had undergone, and the consequences of the cruel wounds he had received, had brought on the mortal blow.

The enemy observing this head of column to march in good order did not venture to attack it otherwise than with bullets. These were despised by it, and in a short time it left the enemy behind. When the grenadiers of the old guard came to pass across this fire, they closed around Napoleon like a moving fortress, proud of their superior privilege of protecting him. Their music was expressive of this lofty complacency; in the most imminent crisis of the danger, it played the air of those well-known words, "*Ou peut on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille !*" ("Where can one be happier than in the bosom of his family!") But the emperor, whose notice nothing escaped, stopped it, and said, "Rather play, *Vcillons au salut de l'Empire,*" ("Let us watch over the safety of the empire,") words certainly more adapted to his own preoccupation, and to the position of all around him.

The fire of the enemy having now become very annoying, he commanded it to be stopped, and two hours afterwards arrived at Krasnoe. The mere sight of Sebastiani and the foremost grenadiers, who had arrived before him, had been sufficient to drive out the enemy's infantry. Napoleon entered the place in anxiety, not knowing with whom he had had to encounter, and with a body of cavalry too weak to be a protection to him out of the reach of the high road. He left Mortier and the young guard half a league behind him, thus stretching out his feeble hand to the assistance of his army from too great a distance, and determined to wait for its arrival.

The passage of his column had not been attended with much bloodshed, but it had had more difficulties

to contend with from the ground than from the enemy; the road was hilly, and every eminence retained some of their cannon, which they neglected to spike, and quantities of baggage, which were plundered of the most valuable articles and then abandoned. The Russians from their heights could explore the whole interior of the army, all its weaknesses and deformities, all, in short, which in general is with the utmost caution concealed.

It seemed, however, as if Miloradowitch from his elevated position had contented himself with insulting the passage of the emperor and the old guard, so long the wonder and terror of Europe. He did not venture to collect the fragments of it till it had actually vanished from his sight: then he felt his courage revive, compressed his forces, and, descending from his heights, valiantly threw himself with twenty thousand men across the high road. By this movement, he separated from the emperor Eugene, Davoust, and Ney, and barred against them the road to Europe.

#### CHAPTER IV.

WHILE these preparations for his arrival were going on, Eugene was exerting himself at Smolensk to unite his scattered troops. He tore them away with difficulty from the pillage of the magazines, and could not succeed even in rallying eight thousand men before the 15th November was far advanced. He was obliged to promise them provisions, and direct their views to Lithuania to induce them to begin their route. The prince was overtaken by night three leagues from Smolensk, and one half of his soldiers had already

quitted their ranks. On the morrow, he continued his route with those whom the cold of the night and of death had not rendered immoveable around their bivouacs.

The report of cannon, which had been heard the day before, had now ceased; the royal column advanced with great labour and pain, adding many wrecks of its own to those which it fell in with in its progress. At its head, the viceroy and the chief of his staff, absorbed in their own melancholy reflections, suffered their horses to proceed unchecked. They gradually became detached from their column without noticing the separation, for the road was interspersed with stragglers, and men marching each according to his own pleasure, and among whom all endeavours to keep order had been abandoned.

They advanced in this way till within two leagues of Krasnoe; then, however, a singular movement, occurring immediately before them, commanded the whole of their attention. Many of the disbanded men just noticed had suddenly stopped; those next to them, still moving forward, united in one group with them: others who had been more in advance than either now fell back upon both; thus the accumulation became sudden and rapid, and one dense and solid mass was soon formed. The viceroy, in extreme surprise, now looked round, and discovered that he had advanced a full hour's march before his corps; and that he had about him not more than fifteen hundred men, consisting of all ranks and nations, without organization, chiefs, order, or arms either ready or adapted for battle, and that he was summoned to surrender.

This summons was answered by a general burst of indignation. But the officer who delivered it, and who was unaccompanied, persisted. "Napoleon and

his guard," he said, "were defeated; you are surrounded by twenty thousand Russians; your safety depends entirely on your accepting conditions of surrender; and Miloradowitch offers you none but honourable ones."

At these words, Guyon, one of those generals all of whose men were dead or dispersed, rushed from amidst the multitude, and exclaimed, "Return instantly to the place you came from, and tell him who sent you, that if he have twenty thousand men we have eighty thousand!" and the Russian, in astonishment, withdrew.

All this was the work of little more than an instant, and almost immediately after, flashes of fire and whirlwinds of smoke burst forth from the hill to the left of the road, a storm of shells and grape-shot swept the high road, and the heads of columns, in a threatening attitude, appeared ready to charge with their bayonets.

The viceroy experienced a moment of hesitation. He was extremely reluctant to abandon this miserable multitude; but, at length, leaving with them the chief of his staff, he hastened back to his divisions to conduct them as rapidly as possible into action, that they might pass through the obstacle before it became absolutely insurmountable, intending otherwise to perish with them in the attempt; for, after attaining the honours of a crown, and the glory of so many victories, his lofty spirit could not think of a surrender.

In the mean time, Guilleminot called together all the officers, who in this disorderly assemblage were interspersed among the soldiers. Several generals and colonels, and a great number of subalterns pressed forward instantly from the mass, and crowded round him. They consulted for a moment together, and,

after appointing him their chief, they divided all the men who had hitherto been confounded in a single mass into platoons, thus giving them some degree of order and efficiency.

This organization was effected under a severe fire. Superior officers hastened, with the utmost zeal and even pride, to place themselves in the ranks as common soldiers. Another instance of high-spirited feeling occurred among some marines of the guard, who would admit no chief but one of their own officers, while each of the other platoons was commanded by a general. Till now, they had no colonel but their emperor; and, although in imminent danger of destruction, they resolutely sustained their privilege, which no peril could make them forget or abandon, and which was admitted at once with readiness and respect.

The whole of these brave men being thus arranged, continued their march towards Krasnoe, and had already passed the batteries of Miloradowitch, when that general, precipitating his columns upon their flanks, pressed them so closely that they were compelled to face about and select a position for defending themselves. It must be related to the everlasting honour of these fifteen hundred French and Italian warriors, who were only in the proportion of one to ten against the enemy, and who had no weapons fitted to cope with them but an undaunted countenance and attitude and a few muskets fit for service, that they kept their enemies at a distance for more than an hour.

But the viceroy and the remains of his divisions had not begun to make their appearance. Longer resistance was become impossible. Summonses to surrender were now multiplied. During the short suspense of hostilities which these required, a cannonading was

heard at a distance, both in front and rear. Thus "the whole army was now attacked at once, and from Smolensk to Krasnoe there was one continued battle! If assistance was required, therefore, none could possibly be expected from waiting for it. They must go and seek for it. But on what side? Towards Krasnoe it was impossible; they were at too great a distance from it. Every thing rendered it probable that the Russians were successful there. It would, moreover, upon that plan, be necessary to retreat, and the troops of Miloradowitch, who were heard calling to them from their ranks to lay down their arms, were too near to admit of turning their backs upon them. It was far better, then, as their front was now in the direction of Smolensk, and as prince Eugene was on that side, to unite firmly in one mass, to connect thoroughly all their movements, and thus undauntedly re-enter Russia, cutting their way through the body of Russians now before them; they might then, after reuniting with the viceroy, return and overthrow Miloradowitch, and at length arrive at Krasnoe."

This proposal of their chief was received with unanimous assent. Immediately the column, formed in a compact mass, rushed against ten thousand muskets, as well as the cannon of the enemy. The Russians, in absolute amazement, at first opened their ranks and permitted this small number of warriors, nearly unarmed, to penetrate into the midst of them. But when they understood what was actually their object, they were so struck either with admiration or compassion, that they loudly called to our troops from both sides of the road which was lined by their battalions to stop, entreating and conjuring them for their own sakes to surrender. But no other reply was made to this appeal than by a still intrepid advance, the silence



of determination, and the point of the bayonet. A full discharge was then poured upon them, within pistol shot, from the whole of the Russian line, and one half of this heroic column fell to the ground either killed or wounded.

The rest proceeded in their course without a single individual of them quitting the main body, and without any of the enemy daring to approach it. Very few of these unfortunate men lived to see the return of the viceroy, whose divisions were now approaching. Then only they became disunited. They hastily threw themselves among his feeble ranks, which opened affectionately to receive and protect them.

For the space of an hour they had been exposed to the fire of the Russian cannon. While half of the enemy's forces had pursued Guillemot, and compelled him to retrograde, Miloradowitch, at the head of the other half, had checked the advance of prince Eugene. His right was supported on a wood, the heights round which were lined with cannon; his left touched upon the high road, but more in the rear, with reserve and caution. This arrangement had dictated the one made by Eugene. The royal column, as fast as it arrived, had deployed to the right of the road, its right more in advance than its left. The prince thus placed the high road, which was the object of contention, obliquely between himself and the enemy. Each of the two armies occupied it by its left.

The Russians, placed in a position thus offensive, were contented with defending themselves in it. They attacked Eugene only with balls. A cannonade began, most furious and destructive on their part, but on ours with little effect. Eugene, annoyed by their fire, speedily formed his resolution. He called up the 14th French division, ranged it on the left of the highway,

and pointed out to it the woody height on which the enemy was supported, and which formed his principal strength ; that was the grand pivot, the focus of the action, and in order to carry every thing else it was necessary to begin with carrying that. He had little or no hopes of its being effected ; but the attempt would draw the attention and forces of the enemy to that side, the right of the high road would then remain free, and he would try all in his power to avail himself of it.

Three hundred soldiers, formed in three bodies, were all who could prevail upon themselves to mount to this assault. These devoted men resolutely advanced against thousands of enemies occupying a position peculiarly formidable. A battery of the Italian guard was drawn out for their protection ; but at the first effort the Russian batteries rendered it ineffective, and their cavalry took immediate possession of it.

In the mean time, the three hundred French persevered in opposition to a slaughtering discharge of grape-shot, and had already reached the enemy's position, when on a sudden two large bodies of cavalry issued at full speed from two sides of the wood, charged against them with the utmost fury, and completely overthrew and massacred them. They every one perished ; and with them all the discipline and courage that had remained in the division to which they belonged.

It was then that general Guillemot again appeared, and obtained the protection he so much needed. That in a situation so critical, prince Eugene, with only four thousand men, dreadfully reduced by weakness, should not have given way to despondence, but have still presented to the enemy a lofty and audacious bearing, was

just what from such a commander we should have fully expected : but that the sight of our disaster and the natural ardour of success should not have stimulated the Russians to more important and decisive efforts, in short, that they should have suffered the night to terminate the battle, this certainly we cannot but consider even now as a matter of profound astonishment. Victory was so utterly new to them that, in this instance, although they absolutely held it in their own hands, they knew not how to avail themselves of the opportunity : they postponed the completion of it to the following day.

But the viceroy perceived that the greater part of the Russians, attracted by his demonstrations, had been drawn to the left of the road, and he waited till night, the natural ally of the weaker party, should have suspended all their movements. Then, leaving fires behind him on that side in order to deceive the enemy, he withdrew, and, proceeding entirely across the fields, turned and passed in silence the left of the position of Miloradowitch, while that general, too confident of his success, was not improbably dreaming of receiving on the following day the sword of the son of Napoleon.

In the midst of this hazardous march, there was one moment of dreadful crisis. At the instant when these brave men, the gallant survivors of so many battles, were stalking with soft footsteps and checked respiration along the line of the Russian army, when their absolute fate was suspended on a look or an exclamation of alarm, the moon on a sudden burst from behind a thick cloud, and shone out in all her lustre as if with a view to disclose their movements. A Russian voice at the same moment ordered them to halt, and demanded who they were ? They thought that all was over with

them; but Klisby, a Pole, went up to the Russian, and, addressing him in his own language with perfect self-command, said in a low voice, "Hist, fool! do you not see that we belong to the corps of Owarof, and that we are going upon a secret expedition?" The Russian was accordingly deceived and silenced.

But parties of Cossacks were every moment advancing upon the flanks of the column, as if with a view to reconnoitre it. They then returned full speed to their main body. Frequently their squadrons approached apparently with the view of charging; but they always stopped short of that, whether from any uncertainty respecting the object before them, for our troops did all they were able to deceive them, or from prudence, for the column frequently halted, and presented to them a firm and determined front.

At length, after a march of two hours' duration, and of the most cruel anxiety, our troops rejoined the high road; and the viceroy was already at Krasnoe, when, on the 17th of November, Miloradowitch, descending from his heights to seize his expected prey, found nothing on the field of battle but stragglers, whom no inducement could prevail upon the night before to quit their fits.

## CHAPTER V.

THE emperor, on his part, had been expecting the viceroy the whole of the preceding day. The sound of his engagement had annoyed and irritated him. A retrograde effort to reach him had been made in vain, and night coming on without the prince's arrival, had increased the solicitude of his adoptive father.

“ Eugene, and the army of Italy, and the long day of expectation every moment disappointed, was it all over with them at last ?” One only hope remained with Napoleon ; which was that the viceroy, driven back upon Smolensk, might there have joined Davoust and Ney ; and that on the morrow, the three together would make a decisive and successful effort.

In the anxiety which harassed him he called together those of his marshals who remained with him. These were Berthier, Bessieres, Mortier and Lefebvre : they were safe ; they had surmounted the grand difficulty ; Lithuania was open to them, and they had only to continue their retreat : but would they desert their companions who were still in the midst of the Russian army ? unquestionably not ; and they decided on again entering Russia, to extricate them from it, or to perish there with them.

This resolution having been formed, Napoleon coolly prepared the arrangements necessary for its execution. The great and important movements carried on around him never for a moment shook his determination. He knew that Kutusof was hastening forward to surround him and take him prisoner in Krasnoe. And on the preceding night, that between the 16th and 17th, he had been apprized that Ojarowski, with an advanced guard of Russian infantry, had already got before him, and was stationed in a village in the rear of his left.

Misfortunes rather irritating than depressing him, he had called for Rapp and told him, “ That it was absolutely necessary for him to depart instantly, and hasten through the darkness to attack that infantry with the bayonet ; that this was the first time they had displayed such audacity, and that he was determined to make them so completely to repent of it, that they

should never come so near his head-quarters again." Then, immediately calling back his aide-de-camp, "But no!" he resumed, "let Roguet and his division go alone! Do you stay here. I would not have you killed here; I shall want you at Dantzic."

Rapp, when carrying this order to Roguet, could not sufficiently express his astonishment that his chief, surrounded as he was by eighty thousand enemies whom he was going to attack on the morrow with nine thousand men, should feel such perfect confidence in his safety as to concern himself about what he should have to do at Dantzic, a city from which he was separated by the severity of winter, two hostile armies, famine, and a distance of a hundred and eighty leagues!

The night-attack at Chirkowa and Maliewo was successful. Roguet formed his judgment of the position of the enemy from the direction of their fires; they occupied two villages united by a *plateau* which was defended by a ravine. He disposed his troops in three columns of attack: those of the right and left were to approach without any noise and as near to the enemy as possible; then, at the signal for charge, which he would himself give from the centre, they were to precipitate themselves upon the Russians without firing, and to rely solely on the bayonet.

The two wings of the young guard immediately began the action. While the Russians, taken completely by surprise, and not knowing in what point they were called upon to defend themselves, were moving in hesitation between their right and left, Roguet with his column made a furious onset on their centre, and penetrated into the midst of their camp, which he entered with his troops at the same time as the enemy. The Russians in their state of dreadful dis-

persion and disorder had barely time to throw the larger part of their great and small arms into a neighbouring lake, and to set fire to the camp, the flames of which, instead of being serviceable to them, only lighted the way to their destruction.

This encounter stopped for twenty-four hours the movement of the Russian army, and allowed the emperor to remain at Krasnoe and prince Eugene to rejoin him there on the ensuing night. Napoleon received the prince with the most lively joy ; but soon afterwards fell even into still greater anxiety than he had experienced before about the fate of Ney and Davoust.

Around us the camp of the Russians presented a spectacle like those at Winkowo, Malo-Iaroslavetz, and Wiazma. Every evening in front of the general's tent the relics of Muscovite saints were exhibited by the light of a vast number of tapers to the adoration of the soldiers. While, in conformity to their customs, each individual testified his devotion by countless signs of the cross and genuflexions, their priests were employed in fanaticizing them by exhortations which to civilized nations must appear ridiculous and barbarous.

Notwithstanding, however, the powerful influence of these means, the vast numbers of the Russians, and our great weakness, while Eugene was unfortunately engaged with Miloradowitch, Kutusof who was only two leagues distant from the scene had remained immoveable. During the succeeding night Beningsen, whose ardour was kindled by the zeal of Wilson, in vain endeavoured to excite any in the aged Russian. Converting the defects of his too advanced age, his slowness, and his singular circumspection, into virtues, he denominated them wisdom, humanity, and prudence ;

appearing determined to end as he had begun. For, if we may compare small objects with great, his fame arose from a source totally opposite to that of Napoleon; fortune having created the one, but the other having created his fortune.

He boasted, "that he advanced only by short marches; that every three days he allowed his men time to rest: he should feel himself disgraced, and would halt immediately were they to be in want of bread and water for a single moment." Then, in a tone of great self-complacency, he observed, "that since leaving Wiazma he had escorted the French army as his prisoners, chastising them whenever they had attempted to halt or quit the high road; that it was of no use to commit himself in action with those who were already his captives. That the Cossacks, an advanced guard, and an army of artillery, were quite sufficient to complete their business, and oblige them to pass successively under the yoke. That, in pursuing this object, Napoleon was of wonderful assistance to him. Why should any man purchase of fortune what she so liberally bestowed upon him? The close of Napoleon's career was clearly and irrevocably fixed. That meteor would be extinguished in the marshes of the Berezina. There would the great Colossus be broken, in the presence of Wittgenstein, Tchitchakof and himself, in the midst of all the armies of Russia. He should himself have delivered him over to them, enfeebled, disarmed and dying. This would be for him glory enough."

To this discourse, the English officer, only rendered more urgent and eager by it, replied merely by entreating the field-marshal "to leave his head-quarters for a moment, and advance to the neighbouring heights: there he would perceive that Napoleon's last



hour was come. Would he suffer him to pass the frontier of Old Russia? Would he permit that great victim now to escape, whom she so justly claimed as a sacrifice? He had only to strike the blow; he had merely to give the order; a single charge would be sufficient; and two hours would change the face of Europe!"

Then kindling in animation in proportion to the indifference with which Kutusof heard him, Wilson held out to him, for the third time, the terrors of universal indignation. "Even the Cossacks of his own army, at the sight of that lagging, mutilated, dying column, thus escaping from his grasp, remarked that it was a shame to let such skeletons come out of their tomb." But Kutusof, whose ardour and energy had been abated and nearly destroyed by the incurable disease of old age, became only irritated by the efforts thus made to stir him to action, and by some short and violent reply closed the lips of the indignant Englishman.

It is asserted that the report of a spy had represented Krasnoe as filled with an enormous mass of the imperial guard, and that the old marshal was reluctant to endanger his reputation by coming into contact with them. But the view of our distress emboldened Beningsen; and the staff-major prevailed upon Strogonof, Gallitzen, and Miloradowitch, and more than fifty thousand Russians, with a hundred pieces of cannon, to venture, notwithstanding Kutusof's opposition, to attack fourteen thousand French and Italians, debilitated, famished, and half-frozen.

Napoleon was fully apprized of the imminence of his danger. He had it in his power to withdraw from it. Daylight had not yet arrived. He might, if he judged it wise to do so, avoid this bloody conflict, and

rapidly move forward, with Eugene and his guard, to Orcha and Borizof. There he would immediately rally around him the thirty thousand French troops which were with Victor and Oudinot, those with Dombrowski, with Regnier, with Schwartzenberg, and at all his depôts, and would, in the following year, be again able to show an army truly formidable.

On the 17th, before day, he despatched his orders, armed himself, went out on foot, and, at the head of his old guard, put it in motion. But it was not towards Poland, his ally, that he directed its march, nor towards his beloved France, where he might once more find himself the head of a rising dynasty, and the emperor of the west. Grasping his sword, he exclaimed, "I have acted the emperor long enough; it is time for me to act the general." He was, in fact, marching back to oppose a host of eighty thousand enemies, through whom he intended to cut his way, thus drawing the whole of their efforts upon himself in order to divert them from Davoust and Ney, and rescue them from that fatal region where they were now enclosed, and from which nothing but this interference seemed capable of extricating them.

The day then broke, displaying on one side the Russian battalions and batteries, which in front, on the right, and in the rear, lined the horizon; and on the other, Napoleon with his six thousand guards, advancing with a firm step, and proceeding to station himself within that formidable circle. At the same time, Mortier, a few paces in advance of the emperor, developed in front of the whole Russian army the five thousand men whom he had still remaining with him.

Their object was to defend the right flank of the high road from Krasnoe as far as the great ravine in

the direction of Stachowa. A battalion of chasseurs of the old guard, arranged in a square like a fort before the high road, served as a support to the left of our young soldiers. On their right, on the snowy plains surrounding Krasnoe, the remaining cavalry of the guard, a few cannon, and the four hundred horse of Latour-Maùbourg, (for, since leaving Smolensk, the cold had destroyed or dispersed five hundred,) were substituted for those battalions and batteries in which the French army was now so dreadfully deficient.

The artillery of the duke of Treviso was reinforced by a battery commanded by Drouat, one of those few superior men who are endowed with all the vigour and power of virtue, who conceive the whole business of human life to be comprised in the performance of duty, and who are capable of making the noblest sacrifices with perfect simplicity as well as sincerity.

Claparede remained in Krasnoe, and was protecting with the few soldiers under him in that place the wounded, the baggage, and the retreat. Prince Eugene continued to retreat towards Lyadi. His engagement on the day before, and his night-march had nearly demolished his corps; his divisions still retained something of order and compactness; but, instead of being in a capacity for fighting, could scarcely do more than drag themselves along and die.

In the mean time, Roguet had been recalled from Maliewo to the field of battle. The enemy was pushing some columns through that village, and extending himself more and more beyond our right with a view to surround us. The battle then began! But what a battle? The emperor had here no opportunity of exhibiting those sudden illuminations, those prompt inspirations, that lightning of thought and energy, any of

those rapid, momentous, and decisive manœuvres, the daring of which precludes the slightest expectation of them, which, as it were, take fortune by storm, wrest the victory by violence, and by which he had so often astonished, appalled, and overwhelmed his enemies ! All their movements were free and unconfined, all ours were fettered ; and the genius of attack was now reduced to defence.

But here, also, was furnished a decisive proof that renown is by no means a worthless shadow but a real and effective power, and doubly powerful by the inflexible firmness and fearless confidence with which she inspires her favourites, and the timid precautions which she suggests to those who dare to attack her. The Russians had nothing to do but to march forward in advance, without in the slightest degree manœuvring, and even without firing : their mass would have been sufficient. Napoleon and his feeble force must have been inevitably crushed by that alone. But they did not venture to come in contact with him. The very sight of the conqueror of Egypt and of Europe struck them with awe and terror. The pyramids, Marengo, Austerlitz, Friedland, an army of victories, seemed to rise up for his defence and assistance, and interpose, as with some overpowering spell, between him and this immense body of Russians : it was scarcely possible not to believe that, in the eyes of a people so superstitious and so superstitious, his extraordinary renown excited an apprehension of something supernatural ; that they conceived it almost beyond their reach and annoyance, and thought they ought to attack it and could have any effect upon it only at a secure distance ; in short, that against the old guard, that living fortress, that column of granite as its chief

had designated it, men were powerless, and that cannon alone could by any possibility demolish it.

They effected wide and deep breaches in the ranks of Roguet, and the young guard; but they killed without conquering. These new soldiers, one half of whom had never been before in battle, stood this deadly fire for the space of three hours without retreating a single step to avoid it, and without being able to return it, as their cannon had been broken, and the Russians kept beyond the reach of their small arms.

But every moment was now adding to the strength of the enemy and to the weakness of Napoleon. The report of cannon, and a communication from Claparede apprized him that, in the rear of him and Krasnoe, Beningsen was making himself master of the high road from Lyadi and cutting off his retreat. The fire of the enemy was flashing in the east, the south, and the west. They were shut out from every side but one, that of the north and the Dnieper, towards an eminence at the foot of which were the high road and the emperor. They imagined they could perceive the enemy covering that eminence with cannon. These were just over the head of Napoleon; they would have been discharged within pistol-shot of him. He was informed of the circumstance, and glancing his eye on the spot for an instant, merely said, "Well then, let a battalion of my chasseurs carry it!" Then, without paying any farther attention to the matter, his looks and concern reverted exclusively to the danger of Mortier.

At length, just at this moment, Davoust made his appearance through a cloud of Cossacks whom he was dispersing before him by his hasty advance. When

within sight of Krasnoe the marshal's troops disbanded themselves and ran across the fields in order to pass the right of the enemy's line behind which they had approached. Davoust and his generals were unable to rally them till they reached Krasnoe.

The first corps was now saved ; but information arrived at the same time that our rear-guard could no longer defend themselves at Krasnoe, and that Ney might possibly be still at Smolensk, but that all expectation of his arrival was to be abandoned. Napoleon, however, hesitated ; he could not for some time make up his mind to so great a sacrifice.

At length, however, as every thing was on the point of being lost, he decided. He accordingly sent for Mortier, and grasping his hand in the greatest distress, said, " that now not an instant was to be lost, that the enemy was assailing him on all sides ; that Kutusof might already have reached Lyadi, and even Orcha, and the last bend of the Borysthenes before him : he would, therefore, proceed thither with all possible speed with his old guard in order to get possession of the passage. Davoust should relieve Mortier ; but both must strenuously endeavour to keep possession of Krasnoe till night, when they would proceed to rejoin him." Then, with a heart overwhelmed with grief at the idea of the misfortunes of Ney, and almost in despair at the thought of abandoning him, he moved slowly from the field of battle, passed through Krasnoe, where he again halted, and afterwards made his way to Lyadi.

Mortier was resolved to obey ; but the Hollanders of the guard at this crisis lost, together with the third of their numbers, an important post which they had been defending, and the enemy had instantly covered the position with artillery. Roguet, finding himself ex-

tremely harassed by its fire, attempted to silence it. One regiment which he pushed forward against the Russian battery was repulsed. A second (the 1st *voltigeurs*) dashed into the very midst of the Russians; two charges of cavalry were unable to throw it into disorder; and it was still pressing forward, almost torn to pieces as it was by grape-shot, when a third charge completed its destruction. Roguet could save only fifty soldiers and eleven officers.

This general had lost half of his troops. It was two o'clock; and yet he was still astonishing the Russians by the firm and fearless aspect which he exhibited when, at last, deriving confidence from the departure of the emperor, the enemy pressed him with such closeness that the young guard were almost compacted into one powerless mass, and in a short time could neither keep their ground nor retreat.

Fortunately, a few platoons whom Davoust had rallied, and the appearance of another party of his stragglers, called off the attention of the Russians. Mortier availed himself of it. He ordered the three thousand men whom he had still left to retreat at the usual marching step, in front of their fifty thousand enemies. "Do you hear, soldiers," said general Laborde, "the marshal orders the ordinary time! the ordinary time, soldiers!" And that brave but unfortunate body of men, carrying off with them some of their wounded, and under a dreadful fire of balls and grape-shot, moved slowly off over the field of carnage as coolly as if they had been merely manœuvring on parade.

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## CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Mortier had interposed Krasnoe between himself and Beningsen he was safe. The enemy could do no injury between that place and Lyadi but by the fire of his batteries which lined the left of the high road ; and Colbert and Latour-Maubourg kept these in check upon their heights. A shell entered the body of a horse and burst there, blowing the horse to pieces without hurting the rider, who fell upon his feet to the ground and proceeded on.

In the mean time the emperor had halted at Lyadi, four leagues from the field of battle. When night came on he was apprized that Mortier whom he thought to be behind him had got before him. He became considerably dejected and distressed ; and sent for the marshal, and with evident emotion said to him, “ that he had beyond a doubt fought gloriously, and suffered much ; but why had he placed his emperor between himself and the enemy ? Why had he thus exposed him to be made a prisoner ? ”

The marshal, however, had passed Napoleon without knowing it. He explained the circumstances of the case ; he said, “ that he had at first left Davoust in Krasnoe endeavouring again to rally his troops ; and that he had himself halted not far from that place ; but that the first corps, being driven back upon his, compelled him to retrograde ; and he observed that Kutusof was, in fact, very languidly following up his success, and seemed to have presented himself on our flank with his whole army for no other purpose than that of enjoying our misery and gathering up our remains.”



On the following day the march was continued with hesitation. The impatient stragglers went before; they all passed Napoleon, they beheld him on foot, with his baton in his hand, proceeding with difficulty and reluctance, and halting every quarter of an hour as if he could scarcely tear himself away from old Russia, the frontier of which he had just passed (at Lyadi), and in which he had left his unfortunate companion in arms.

In the evening they reached Dombrowna, a town built of wood, and, like Lyadi, having inhabitants in it; an extraordinary sight for an army which for three successive months had beheld nothing but ruins. At last they had got beyond the confines of old Russia, beyond those deserts of snow and ashes, and had entered on a country inhabited, friendly, and with the language of which they were acquainted! About the same time, the rigour of the cold was much mitigated, a thaw commenced, and they received some distributions of provisions.

Thus the winter, the enemy, the solitude of the desert, and, with respect to some of them, bivouacs and famine, had all ceased at once. But it was then too late. The emperor saw that his army was destroyed. The name of Ney proceeded every moment from his lips with ejaculations of deep agitation. On that night in particular he was heard lamenting with bitter sighs, and exclaiming "that the sufferings of his poor soldiers would break his heart; and yet that it was out of his power to assist them without fixing himself in one particular place: but where could such a station be found, where could he fix, without military stores, provisions, or cannon? He was not yet strong enough to stop. He must therefore reach Minsk as soon as possible." He had scarcely finished

these observations when a Polish officer arrived in great haste with the intelligence that Minsk itself, his magazine, his asylum, his solitary hope, had just fallen into the power of the Russians! Tchitchakof had entered it on the 17th. Napoleon was at first speechless, as if he had received a mortal blow; then, rousing himself in proportion to the imminence of his danger, he coolly remarked, "Well! we have nothing to do now but to make our way by the bayonet."

But in order to come in contact with this new enemy, who had escaped Schwartzenberg, or whom Schwartzenberg might perhaps have willingly suffered to pass unmolested (for the particular circumstances were not known), and to avoid Kutusof and Wittgenstein, it was necessary to cross the Berezina at Borizof. Napoleon, therefore, immediately (on the 19th of November, from Dombrowna) sent orders to Dombrowski to think no longer of fighting with Hoertel, but to make himself master of that passage without a moment's loss. He wrote to the duke of Reggio to march rapidly on towards the same point, and to hasten to regain possession of Minsk; the duke of Belluno was to cover his march. After giving these orders his agitation ceased, and his mind, fatigued by a series of suffering, gave way to dejection.

The day was still far from making its appearance when a singular noise roused him from his slumber. Some state, that at first a few discharges of fire-arms were heard, but that these had been fired off by our own troops merely to induce those who were comfortably sheltered within houses to quit their situations that they might succeed to them; others assert, that conformably to an irregularity too frequent at our bivouacs, at which our soldiers called out loudly to one another by their names, the name of *Hausanne*, a grenadier,

having suddenly been called out aloud in the silence of the night, it was confounded with the cry "*aux armes*" ("to arms"), announcing a surprise of the enemy.

But whatever might be the real cause, they all saw, or thought they saw the Cossacks, and Napoleon heard everywhere around him the sounds of war and alarm. Without, however, being at all agitated himself he said to Rapp, "Go and see what it is; no doubt the rascally Cossacks wanted to break in upon us during our sleep." But in a short time, the noise increased to an immense tumult of men running various ways to fight or to fly, and who, meeting each other in the dark, mistook one another for enemies.

Napoleon for an instant imagined the attack serious. A deep although narrow stream flowed through the town, and he asked if the artillery which he now had remaining had been placed behind it: on being answered that that precaution had been neglected, he hastened to the bridge, and had the cannon immediately conveyed beyond that defile.

He then returned to his old guard, halting in front of each battalion. "Grenadiers," said he, "we are retiring, without having been conquered by the enemy; let us not be conquered by ourselves! Let us furnish an example to the whole army. Some among you have already abandoned their eagles, and even their arms. I shall not have recourse to military law to put an end to these irregularities, but merely to yourselves! I rely upon you to execute justice upon each other. I confide your discipline to the keeping of your honour."

He ordered the rest of the troops to be addressed in a similar strain. These few words were sufficient for the veteran grenadiers, who probably did not require even them. The others heard them with acclamations of approval, but within an hour afterwards,

as soon as the marching began, they were forgotten. With respect to his rear-guard, imputing principally to them so false and groundless an alarm, he sent Davoust a message expressive of his displeasure.

At Orcha were found stores of provisions in great abundance, a bridge equipment, and sixty vessels fitted for service, all of which were burnt; and thirty-six pieces of horse-artillery, which were distributed between Davoust, Eugene and Maubourg.

At this place we again saw (the first time on our retreat) officers and *gendarmes* who were expressly charged to arrest the numerous stragglers, and oblige them to rejoin their respective standards, and who were here stationed on the two bridges over the Dnieper. But those eagles which formerly promised every thing glorious and beneficial were now avoided as birds only of evil omen.

Disorder had by this time attained no inconsiderable degree of organization; and some were found who were remarkably clever at it. When immense numbers were crowded together, these unprincipled wretches would shout aloud, "The Cossacks are coming!" their object was to quicken the march of those who preceded them, and increase the disorder and tumult, of which they availed themselves to carry off the provisions and cloaks of those who were not particularly on their guard.

The *gendarmes*, on seeing this army now for the first time since its overwhelming disaster, amazed at the sight of so much misery, terrified by such dreadful confusion, were daunted from performing their duty. The multitude tumultuously penetrated to the bank of the river belonging to the allies, and the place would have been given up to pillage but for the interposition

of the guard, and a few hundred men still remaining to prince Eugene.

Napoleon entered Orcha with six thousand men, the remains of thirty-five thousand; Eugene with eighteen hundred men, the remains of forty-two thousand; Davoust with four thousand, the remains of sixty-six thousand!

The marshal had himself lost every thing: he was without linen; and emaciated by famine. He eagerly laid hold of a loaf which one of his comrades in arms offered him, and devoured it with voracity. He was also presented with a handkerchief to wipe his face which was covered over with rime. He said "that none but men of steel could go through such trials as these; that it was physically impossible for any others to resist them; that human strength had its limits, and that those limits had in this instance been far exceeded."

He had been the first to support the retreat, as far as Wiazma. He was still observed, agreeably to his habitual practice, to halt at all the defiles, and remain there the last of his corps, sending off every individual to his station, and most assiduously exerting himself to check disorder. He urged his soldiers to insult and deprive of their plunder such of their comrades as threw away their arms, which was the only method of retaining the one party and punishing the other. Some, however, have censured him for carrying his methodical and strict disposition too far in circumstances of such general and irretrievable confusion.

The emperor tried in vain to check the discouragement and irregularities of the soldiers. When alone he was heard to lament the privations and sufferings of his troops; but in public he chose to

appear inflexible on the point of discipline. He therefore ordered it to be proclaimed, "that all should return to their stations; and that if they did not, he would deprive the chiefs of their rank and the privates of life."

This menace had no effect, either good or ill, on men who had become insensible or desperate, men who were flying not from danger but from suffering, and who dreaded less the death with which they were threatened than the life which they were offered.

But the firmness of Napoleon appeared to increase with his danger. In his estimation, and in the midst even of the wildest desert of swamp or ice, this handful of men was always the grand army, and himself the conqueror of Europe. Nor was there any rashness or blind infatuation mixed up with this firmness, as was evident from his burning in this very town and with his own hands all those of his effects which might serve as trophies if he should fall into the enemy's hands.

Here, unfortunately, were destroyed all the papers which he had carefully collected for writing the history of his life: for such was his design when he departed from France to carry on this fatal war. He had then resolved to halt in an attitude of menace on the Duna, and Borysthènes, which he now revisited in flight and unarmed. Then the *ennui* attending a seclusion for six months on the banks of these rivers, where he must have been detained for that period by the winter, appeared to him the most formidable enemy he had to contend with; and, in order effectually to subdue it, this second Cæsar meant to have dictated his Commentaries.

## CHAPTER VII.

EVERY thing, however, had since changed : two armies were blocking up his retreat. The question was through which of them he should attempt to cut his way ; and as the Lithuanian forests into which he was about to plunge were unknown to him, he called together those of his officers, who had been obliged to pass through them in order to join him.

The emperor began by observing, " That a long series of success frequently prepared the way for great reverses ; but that the present was no time for recrimination." He then spoke of the capture of Minsk ; and, admitting the ability of Kutusof's persevering manœuvres on his right flank, declared, " that he had determined to abandon his line of operation upon Minsk, to join the dukes of Belluno and Reggio, to make a direct push against Wittgenstein, and regain Wilna by turning the Berezina at its sources."

Jomini opposed this project. This Swiss general objected the position of Wittgenstein in long defiles. His resistance in them might be either obstinate or languid, but would be long enough to effect our destruction. He added, that at this season of the year, and when the troops were in such a state of disorder, a change of route would be the utter ruin of the army, that it would lose itself in cross-roads, amidst barren and boggy forests : he maintained, that on the high road alone any degree of unity or compactness could possibly be preserved. Borizof, with its bridge over the Berezina, was still open ; and they had only to reach that place.

He then stated that he was acquainted with a road, which, to the right of that town, was raised on wooden

bridges, over some Lithuanian marshes. This, he asserted, was the only road that could conduct to Wilna, by Zembin and Molodetchno, leaving on the left Minsk, and its road which was one day's march longer, and the fifty broken bridges which rendered it impracticable, and also Tchitchakof, who was in actual possession of it. They would thus pass between both armies, and at the same time avoid them both.

The emperor hesitated; but as it was repugnant to his pride to avoid a battle, and he was desirous of quitting Russia with the éclat of a victory, he sent for the ingenious general Dodde. As soon as he saw him approaching, he called out to him, "that the question was, whether to betake themselves to flight by way of Zembin, or go and conquer Wittgenstein at Smoliany;" and knowing that Dodde had just arrived from that position, he inquired, whether it was assailable?

Dodde replied, "that Wittgenstein was in possession of a height there which commanded the whole of the surrounding swampy country; that, in order to advance up to his Russian camp, it would be necessary to take a circuit within both his observation and his reach, following the various windings of the road; that thus our column of attack would expose first their left flank and then their right to his raking fire; that the position, therefore, was in front unassailable, and that, in order to turn it, it would be requisite to retrograde towards Witepsk, and take too long a circuit.

Napoleon, then, baffled in this last hope of glory, decided for Borizof. He ordered general Eblee to proceed with eight companies of sappers and pontoonn-ers to secure his passage over the Berezina, and



Jomini to accompany them as a guide. But he could not help at the same time observing, "that it was a cruel case to retreat thus without fighting! to carry thus the appearance of flight! Why, alas! had he no magazine, no *point d'appui*, which would permit him to halt and still prove to Europe that he knew under all circumstances both how to fight and conquer!"

All his illusions were now destroyed. At Smolensk, which he had been the first both to reach and quit, he had rather been informed of his disaster than actually seen it. At Krasnoe, where our sufferings had passed all of them under his own eye, the imminent peril of the circumstances had diverted his attention from them; but at Orcha, he was enabled at one view, and at full leisure, to contemplate his misfortune.

At Smolensk twenty thousand effective men, a hundred and fifty pieces of cannon, the army treasure, and the hope of obtaining provisions, and breathing-time behind the Berezina, still remained to him; here he had scarcely ten thousand soldiers, almost without clothes or shoes, and embarrassed with numbers of wounded and dying, only a few cannon, and a plundered treasury.

In the course of five days every evil had been aggravated: destruction and disorganization had made frightful progress. Minsk had been taken. Beyond the Berezina he must now expect, instead of the repose and abundance which had been depended upon, only to engage in new battles with a fresh enemy. Finally, the defection of Austria seemed to be announced, and that would probably be the signal for the defection of all Europe.

Napoleon was ignorant, whether, even at Borizof he could counteract the new danger which the hesita-

tions and vacillations of Schwartzberg appeared to have prepared for him. It has been seen, that a third Russian army, that under Wittgenstein, menaced on his right the interval by which he was separated from that town, and that he had opposed to him the duke of Belluno, ordering that marshal to make amends on this occasion for his neglect of the opportunity offered him on the 1st of November, and resume the offensive.

Victor had obeyed, and on the 14th, the very day on which Napoleon left Smolensk, that marshal and the duke of Reggio had driven back the advanced posts of Wittgenstein towards Smoliany, preparing by this encounter a battle which they were agreed to engage in on the following day.

The French were thirty thousand against forty thousand. Here, as at Wiazma, there was a sufficient number of soldiers, if there had not been too many chiefs.

The marshals differed as to the proper mode of proceeding. Victor was desirous of manœuvring on the enemy's left wing, of overwhelming Wittgenstein with the two French corps, and marching by way of Botscheikowo upon Kamen, and from Kamen, by Pouichna, upon Beresino. Oudinot in strong terms expressed his disapprobation of this project, observing that they would thus cut off their communication with the grand army which had summoned them to its assistance.

One of the chiefs thus desiring to manœuvre, while the other wanted to attack in front, neither plan was adopted. Oudinot withdrew during the night to Czereia; and Victor, perceiving this retreat at day-break, was under the necessity of following it.

He did not halt till he had arrived within a day's

march of Lukolm, near Senno, where Wittgenstein gave him little uneasiness ; but, at length, the duke of Reggio received an order dated from Dombrowna directing him upon Minsk, and Victor was about to remain alone in front of the Russian general. It was possible that the latter might then find out his superiority ; and the emperor, at Orcha, where he saw on the 20th of November his rear-guard lost, his left flank menaced by Kutusof, and his foremost column stopped at the Berezina by the army of Volhynia, was apprized that Wittgenstein and forty thousand other enemies, instead of being completely overthrown, were ready to pour down upon his right, and that not a single moment was to be lost.

But Napoleon was slow in resolving to quit the Borysthenes. It seemed to him as if this would be a second abandonment of the unfortunate Ney, and giving up that intrepid companion in arms for ever. Here, as at Lyadi, and at Dombrowna, he was throughout both the day and night inquiring, and despatching persons to ascertain, whether any intelligence of the marshal had been received ; but nothing had transpired respecting even his existence through the medium of the Russian army. This death-like silence had now lasted for four whole days, and yet the emperor still entertained hope.

At length, when compelled himself on the 20th of November to quit Orcha, he still left in that place Eugene, Mortier, and Davoust, and halted at the distance of only two leagues, asking about Ney and still expecting him. A similar feeling of sincere and deep distress was on this subject entertained by the whole army, the remains of which were then contained in Orcha. As soon as the urgency of their immediate and pressing business was over, all their thoughts and

all their looks were directed to the Russian bank. They listened to discover whether any warlike sounds announced his arrival, or rather his last sighs. But they saw nothing but enemies, who were already threatening the bridges of the Borysthènes ! One of the three chiefs was then desirous of destroying them ; but the others opposed it : that would be separating themselves to a still greater distance from their comrade, to admit at once that they despaired of saving him : and, horror-struck at the idea of so heavy a misfortune, they could not bring themselves to yield on any account to such a resolution.

At length, at the close of the fourth day, their hope was at an end. The night brought with it only broken and harassing slumbers. They accused themselves as the authors of his calamity ; as if it had been possible to continue waiting for the third corps in the plains of Krasnoe, where it would have been necessary to fight twenty-eight hours longer, when they had neither strength nor ammunition enough to last for more than one.

Already, as in all cases of great deprivation and grief, they began to recur to recollections. Davoust had been the last who left the unfortunate marshal, and Mortier and the viceroy inquired what had been the last words he spoke to him ! At the sound of the first cannon that were fired on the fifteenth against Napoleon, Ney was desirous that they should both immediately quit Smolensk in the train of the viceroy ; Davoust had refused this, objecting to it the orders of the emperor, and the duty of destroying the ramparts of the city. The two chiefs became irritated against each other, and as Davoust persisted in remaining till the following day, Ney, whose orders were to close the march, had been necessitated to wait for him.

It was true that, on the 16th, Davoust had sent to give him notice of his danger ; but then Ney, either from resentment against Davoust, or in consequence of having actually changed his mind, had sent back the reply " that all the Cossacks in the universe should not hinder him from fulfilling his instructions."

These recollections and the whole series of conjectures on his fate being exhausted, they were relapsing into more than their former melancholy silence, when on a sudden they heard the advance of horses, and the joyful exclamations, " Marshal Ney is saved ! he will be here in a few moments ; here are the Polish horsemen who have announced his arrival !" In reality one of his officers was fast approaching. He stated that the marshal was advancing along the right bank of the Borysthenes, and that he requested assistance.

Night had now begun. Davoust, Eugene, and the duke of Treviso had only the short time that it would last to rekindle the ardour of their soldiers, who had hitherto been constantly at bivouac. For the first time since these unfortunate men left Moscow, they had received a sufficient supply of provisions : they were gone to prepare them, and afterwards to lie down and repose once again under shelter, and in warmth and comfort ! How was it possible to make them resume their arms, to tear them from their asylums during this first night of refreshing rest, the inexpressible delight of which they had just begun to taste ? Who should be able to persuade them to quit such exquisite enjoyment, in order to trace back their own wretched steps, and plunge again into darkness and Russian frost !

Eugene and Mortier contested between them the merit of this painful duty, and the first carried the point only by appealing to his superior rank. Conve-

nient accommodation and liberal distributions had effected that which menaces had been wholly unable to accomplish ; the stragglers had rallied. Eugene collected five or six thousand men. At the sound of Ney's danger they all marched ; but it was a great and mighty effort.

They advanced in darkness and along unknown roads, and proceeded as chance directed them to the distance of two leagues, stopping to listen at almost every step. Their anxiety began now seriously to increase. Had they gone out of their way ? If it should be too late ? Perhaps their unfortunate companions had sunk under their difficulties ? Perhaps, instead of falling in with their beloved friends, they should meet the triumphant Russian army ? In this state of suspense prince Eugene ordered a few cannon to be discharged. They then imagined that they heard on this sea of snow some signals of distress ; they actually did so, and they proceeded from the 3rd corps ; which having no artillery remaining, answered the cannon of the 4th by some volleys of musketry.

The two corps then hastened with all their power to effect a meeting. The first who recognised each other were Ney and Eugene : they ran with mutual eagerness, Eugene with the greatest speed, and threw themselves most affectionately into each other's arms. Eugene wept ; Ney dropped some expressions indicative of anger. The one had been comparatively fortunate, was in a state of mind adapted to sympathy, and felt exalted by the heroism of the warrior whom his own chivalric heroism had first led him to seek and welcome ; the other was still agitated by the hurry of combat, was vexed at the dangers which the army had encountered in his person, and irritated against

Davoust, whom he wrongly accused of having abandoned him.

Some hours afterwards, when Davoust made an attempt to vindicate his conduct to Ney, he could obtain from him nothing but a stern look and these few words, "I have no reproaches to make against you, Marshal; God sees us both, and let Him be your judge."

As soon as the two corps had recognised each other, they no longer kept their distinctive ranks. Soldiers, officers, generals, all had run forward into each other's embraces. Those of Eugene shook hands with those of Ney; they touched them with a joy that was blended with strong feelings of astonishment and curiosity; and they pressed them to their bosoms with the tenderest compassion. They instantly and cordially produced for their use the provisions and brandy which had just been distributed among themselves. They had a thousand questions to ask them; and both parties, now blended in one, soon directed their march on Orcha, full of impatience, the soldiers of Eugene to hear, and those of Ney to relate.

## CHAPTER VIII.

THEY stated that on the 17th of November they had quitted Smolensk with twelve pieces of cannon, six thousand bayonets, and three hundred horses, leaving behind five thousand sick to the enemy's humanity; and that, but for the cannon of Platof and the explosion of the mines, they should never have been able to tear from the place seven thousand stragglers who had

found shelter in it. They related with satisfaction the attention and kindness shown by their chief to the wounded, the women and their children, which furnished another proof that the most brave will always be found to be the most humane.

At the gates of the city an act of infamy had struck them with a sensation of horror which they had not yet got rid of. A mother had there abandoned her own child, a boy of about five years old, and, notwithstanding his cries and tears, driven him off from her sledge, which was heavily loaded with property. "He had never," the unnatural parent said, with a wild and furious air, "he had never seen France! he could never therefore regret it! As for herself, she knew France, and was resolved to see it again!" Twice had Ney ordered the child to be replaced in the arms of its mother, and twice she had cast it from her upon the frozen snow.

This solitary act of guilt, however, amidst innumerable instances of devoted attachment and self-sacrifice, met with its appropriate punishment. The degraded and unnatural woman had been left abandoned on the same snow from which they had rescued her destined victim in order to intrust him to a different mother; and they pointed to the ranks to shew the interesting orphan, who was seen afterwards at the Berezina, then at Wilna, and again at Kowno, and who in fact survived all the difficulties and horrors of the retreat.

In the mean time the officers of Eugene put a multitude of questions to those of Ney, who readily answered them, and went on with their narrative. They depicted themselves as advancing with their marshal towards Krasnoe, following amidst the waste and ruin of our own track, dragging after them a distressed and



helpless multitude, and preceded by another multitude urged on by famine.

They said that they had found the bottom of every ravine covered with helmets, military caps, broken and plundered chests, scattered garments, overthrown carriages, and cannon to which the horses still remained harnessed, prostrate on the ground, dying, and partly devoured.

When near Korythnia, at the conclusion of their first day's march, a violent report and the whistling of a number of bullets over their heads had led them to believe that they should almost instantly be engaged with the enemy. This discharge came apparently from before them, and within a short distance of them, on the same road, and yet they saw nothing of any hostile force. Ricard and his division went forward to discover any, but they found, in a bend of the road, nothing but two French batteries which had been abandoned, together with the ammunition belonging to them, and in the adjoining fields a party of wretched Cossacks galloping off at full speed, terrified at their own audacity in discharging the guns, and at the explosion which they had produced.

Ney's soldiers began then to inquire in their turn, **what** had occurred in their absence? What was the cause of the universal dejection and despondence? Why had so many sound and serviceable arms been abandoned to the enemy? Had they not had time to spike the cannon; or at least to destroy or spoil their ammunition?

Up to that point, however, they observed that they had only seen traces of a disastrous march. But on the following day every thing was changed; and they all united in entertaining the most melancholy pre-

sentiments when they arrived at that tract of snow reddened with blood, and strewn with broken arms and mutilated carcasses. The slain indicated still the ranks in which they had fought, and the place where the fight was hottest. They pointed out to each other the different spots. There, the 14th division had been stationed, as was evident from the numbers of its several regiments on the plates of their battered caps; There again had been posted the Italian guard, as the uniform of the killed decidedly indicated! But what had become of the survivors? The bloody field, the lifeless bodies, or the motionless and icy silence of this scene of desolation and death, they might interrogate in vain; they could neither ascertain the fate of their companions, nor penetrate into that which was about to befall themselves.

Ney had hurried them rapidly over this field of ruin and horror, and they had advanced without meeting any obstacle to a spot where the road deepens into a profound ravine, whence it emerges upon a spacious plain. This was the plain of Katova, and the very same field of battle where, three months before, in their triumphant march towards Russia, they had defeated Newerowski, and saluted Napoleon with the cannon captured the day before from the enemy. They said that, notwithstanding the altered appearance of the ground, from snow, they easily recognised it.

The soldiers of Mortier then observed, "that it was also the very position where the emperor and themselves had waited for them, fighting all the while, on the 17th!" Well, then, resumed Ney's men, there Kutusof, or rather Miloradowitch, succeeded to Napoleon's place, for the old Russian had not yet left Dobroe.

Already the stragglers in advance were retrograding

upon them, pointing to the plains of snow now blackened by the forces of the enemy, when a Russian starting from the main body descended the hill and presented himself unaccompanied before the marshal; and whether from an affectation of politeness, or respect to the misfortunes of our chief, or possibly from an apprehension of the consequences of driving him to despair, delivered in very adulatory terms the injunction with which he had been commissioned, to lay down his arms.

He had been sent by Kutusof. "That field-marshal would not have ventured to make so unacceptable and cruel a proposition to so great a general, so renowned a warrior, if there had remained any chance of his extrication. But eighty thousand troops were in front of him and around him; and, if he entertained any doubt on the subject, Kutusof would willingly permit his sending any one on whom he could depend to examine and count them."

The Russian had not finished his address, when, on a sudden, forty discharges of grape-shot proceeded from the right of his army, mowing down our ranks and effectually interrupting the harangue, and filling the speaker with absolute amazement. At the same moment a French officer darted upon him to cut him down as a traitor, when Ney, checking the officer's violence, called out to the stranger in no little indignation, "A marshal never surrenders; we do not negotiate under the fire of cannon; you are my prisoner." The unfortunate officer was disarmed, and continued exposed to the Russian cannonade. He was not liberated till the army arrived at Kowno twenty-six days afterwards, after having participated in all our difficulties, personally free to make his escape but honourably bound by his parole.

The enemy in a short time redoubled the fury of his fire ; and then, the narrators observed, all those hills which but a little while before appeared so cold and silent, became so many volcanoes in actual eruption. Ney, however, they remarked, seemed to derive from the terrors of the scene only additional animation and energy ; and, indeed, whenever they mentioned the name of their marshal, they did so in a tone of enthusiastic admiration. In the midst of all these explosions, they observed that this man of fire appeared to be merely in his own peculiar element.

Kutusof had not deceived him. On one side appeared eighty thousand men, with ranks entire, full, and deep, well supplied with provisions, in double lines, with numerous squadrons, a vast artillery ranged in a formidable position, and, in short, every thing favourable, even fortune itself, which alone is often a substitute for every thing else. On the other side were five thousand soldiers, a column incompact and straggling, an infirm and languishing march, and arms incomplete, foul, and for the greater part ineffective, and faltering in enfeebled hands.

And yet the French general not only entertained no idea of surrendering, or even of dying, but resolved to cut his way through the opposing mass ; and this without conceiving that he was making any sublime or extraordinary effort. Alone, depending entirely on himself, while all depended entirely upon him, he had merely followed the impulse of his powerful nature, and the lofty confidence of a conqueror whom a long series of improbable successes had confirmed in the belief that every thing was possible.

What most of all astonished them was their own obedience and docility ; for all had proved themselves worthy of him ; and they remarked in reference to this

striking case, that it decidedly showed it was not great tenacity of purpose, great designs, and great darings, that constituted great men, but that more uncommon power, that ascendancy over the minds of others which carries them also along in full sympathy and equal ardour.

Ricard and his fifteen hundred soldiers were at the head ; these Ney launched against the hostile army, and quickly put the rest in order to follow. That division rushed down the road into the ravine, and followed it up to the ascent beyond, whence it was driven back, overwhelmed by the first Russian line.

The marshal, not in the slightest degree daunted, or leaving a moment for others to be so, collected the remains of them, formed them in reserve, and advanced himself in their place ; Ledru, Razout, and Marchand supported him. He ordered four hundred Illyrians to assail the left flank of the enemy's army, while himself with three thousand men mounted to the assault in front. He made no harangue : he marched forward ; he furnished the example, which in every hero is of all oratorical appeals the most eloquent, and of all orders the most imperative. All followed him. They penetrated and overthrew the first Russian line, and without stopping rushed on towards the second ; but before they were able to reach it they were in their turn assailed by a severe shower of iron and lead. In an instant Ney saw all his generals wounded, and the greater part of his soldiers killed ; their ranks were empty ; and their horribly dilapidated column reeled round, tottered, and retreated, hurrying the commander himself with it.

Ney found that he had attempted what was impracticable ; and he waited till the flight of his troops had interposed between them and the enemy that ravine

which was now their only resource. There, without either hope or fear, he halted and re-formed them. He drew up two thousand men against eighty thousand ; he answered the discharge of two hundred pieces of cannon with only six pieces ; and brought disgrace on fortune for betraying courage so ardent and exalted.

Yet it was undoubtedly fortune that struck Kutusof on this occasion with such langour and inertness. To their extreme astonishment, the French beheld this Russian Fabius (caricaturing his imitation, as is generally the case) persist in what he was fond of calling his humanity and his prudence, and remain with his pompous virtues on the heights which he occupied, without permitting himself, without daring even to conquer, and as it were stupified with amazement at his superiority. He saw Napoleon conquered through the medium of his temerity, and he avoided that fault by falling into the one directly opposed to it.

Yet had a single one out of all the Russian corps, in a burst of indignation at their commander's conduct, rushed against our forces, they must inevitably have been completely destroyed. But all were afraid to make a movement so decisive ; they all remained fixed to the clods on which they stood, with the immobility of slaves, as if they possessed no audacity but what they derived from the word of command, and no energy but what was bound up with obedience. This strictness of discipline, which constituted their glory during their own retreat, was their disgrace during ours.

They had been, for a long time uncertain, ignorant of what enemy they had to contend with ; for they had imagined that Ney, on quitting Smolensk, had directed his flight along the right bank of the Dnieper ; and they were thus deceived, as frequently happens by

supposing that their enemy had actually done what he undoubtedly ought to have done.

The Illyrians had returned at the same time in the greatest disorder ; they had met with one very extraordinary incident. These four hundred men, while advancing on the left flank of the enemy's position, had fallen in with a body of five thousand Russians, who were returning from a partial action, in which they had captured an eagle and a number of prisoners.

These two hostile forces, one returning to its position, the other advancing to attack it, proceeded in the same direction, and in parallel lines, without either of them venturing to begin an encounter. They marched so near each other, that the French prisoners stretched out their hands from the Russian ranks, and conjured their comrades to come to their rescue. The latter called out that, if they would come to them, they would receive and protect them. But no one made the first step for this purpose. It was then that Ney was defeated, and involved every thing in the torrent of his retreat.

In the mean time, Kutusof, who relied more on his cannon than on his soldiers, sought to conquer his enemy, and at the same time keep at a safe distance from him. His fire so completely swept the whole ground occupied by the French, that the same ball which struck a man in the first rank reached the hindermost of the train of carriages, and killed some of the female fugitives from Moscow.

Under this murderous storm, the soldiers of Ney, confounded and motionless, looked intently towards their chief, awaiting his decision before they would give themselves up for lost, entertaining hope without

seeing any foundation for it, or rather, agreeably to the remark of one of their officers, because in this awful extremity they perceived his mind serene and tranquil, as if precisely in its natural place or element. His countenance was still and collected; he was observing attentively the enemy's army, which since the stratagem employed by prince Eugene had become distrustful, and had now extended itself far and deeply on his flanks, in order to preclude him from every avenue to escape.

Night began now to mix and confound all objects. Winter was favourable to our retreat only in the circumstance of bringing the darkness on early. Ney had been waiting for it, but he availed himself of it solely by ordering his troops to return to Smolensk. They all observed, that at this command their astonishment was beyond expression. His aide-de-camp himself was unable to credit what he heard. He continued silent, appearing not to comprehend what had been said, and casting on his chief a look of absolute amazement and almost stupefaction. But the marshal repeated the order; on hearing his sharp and peremptory tone they all recognised a fully matured resolution, a resource discovered, that confidence in a man's self which inspires confidence into others, and which, however harassing and critical may be his position, shows a spirit that looks down upon it and commands it. They then obeyed, and, unhesitatingly, turned their backs upon the enemy, upon Napoleon and upon France! They re-entered the fatal territory of Russia! Their retrograde march continued for about an hour; they revisited the field of battle strewed with the remains of the army of Italy: there they halted, and their marshal, who had remained with the rear-guard, then rejoined them.



They keenly observed every movement that he made. What could he mean to do? and, whatever might be his design, how could he direct his steps without a guide in an unknown country? But he, with the clear perception of the experienced warrior, or apparently from a true military instinct, halted on the bank of a ravine sufficiently considerable for a stream to flow along the bottom of it. He ordered the snow to be removed and the ice broken, and then, observing its course, he exclaimed, "This stream flows into the Dnieper. This is our guide! This is what we must follow! It will conduct us to that river, which we must cross! On the opposite bank we shall be safe!" He instantly proceeded in that direction.

At a little distance, however, from the high road which he had just abandoned, he again halted in a village. Its name they were ignorant of, but they thought it was Fomina or Danikowa; there he rallied his troops, and had fires kindled, as if he meant to establish himself in it. The Cossacks, who were following him, were deceived by those indications, and without doubt had sent to inform Kutusof of the spot where, on the following day, a French marshal would lay down his arms; for within a short time the thunder of their cannon was distinctly heard.

Ney listened, "Has Davoust," said he, "remembered me after all?" He listened again; but the discharges followed each other at equal intervals; it was a salute. Convinced then, that in the Russian camp they were anticipating his capture, he swore that he would belie their triumph, and again pursued his march.

At the same time, his Poles were scouring the whole surrounding country. A lame peasant was the only

inhabitant they had been able to discover. This was an unexpected advantage. He informed them that the Dnieper was only a league distant, but that it was not fordable, and could hardly yet be frozen over. The marshal said, "That it would be;" and, on some one's objecting the commenced thaw, he remarked, "that it was of no consequence; pass it they must, as this was, in fact, his only resource."

At length, about eight o'clock, they passed through a village, the ravine ended, and the peasant, who marched at their head, then stopped and pointed out to them the river. They supposed that this must have been between Syrokorenje and Gusinoe. Ney and his foremost soldiers ran towards it. The river was at this point frozen and able to bear. The course of the pieces of ice which it brought down was at this place stopped by a sharp bend of its banks, and the cold had soon cemented and increased them; but it was only just at this point; both above and below, its surface was still moveable.

This observation occasioned uneasiness and anxiety to succeed their first feelings of delight. The hostile river might present only a perfidious appearance. An officer devoted himself to all the danger of making the experiment, and was observed to reach the opposite bank only with the greatest difficulty. He returned to announce that the men, and possibly some of the horses might cross, but that the rest must be abandoned, and that not an instant ought to be lost, as the ice had already become affected by the thaw.

But in this nightly and silent advance across fields of a column consisting of enfeebled men, of wounded, and of women with their children, it had been impossible to proceed in such close and compact order as to prevent extension and disunion, and preclude many

from losing all traces of each other in the darkness. Ney saw that he had with him only a part of his troops ; nevertheless, he might himself without delay have passed the river, secured his own safety, and waited for the others on the opposite bank. Such an idea, however, did not occur to him, and when some one suggested it to him, he rejected it. He devoted three hours to the business of rallying ; and without permitting himself to be agitated by impatience, or alarmed by the danger of the attempt, he wrapped himself up in his cloak, and passed these three hours, critical and full of danger as they were, in profound sleep on the river's bank ; so completely did he possess the temperament of great men, a strong mind in a robust body, and that vigorous health without which no man can be a hero.

## CHAPTER IX.

At length, about midnight, the passage of the river commenced ; but those who first quitted the bank gave warning that the ice yielded under them, that it was sinking, and that they were obliged to advance with the water up to their knees ; and in a short time the frail support was heard to split asunder with frightful crashes, which were prolonged, as on a general thaw. They all stopped in consternation,

Ney ordered them to pass only in single file, and they went forward with great precaution, often not knowing, in the darkness, whether they were about to set their feet upon the main ice, or in the crevices : for there were various places where it was requisite

to step over considerable gaps, or leap from one piece of ice to another, at the hazard of falling between both, and disappearing for ever. The foremost hesitated; but those who were behind, called upon them to proceed on.

When at length, after a great number of these sudden alarms, they reached the other bank, and considered themselves safe, an almost perpendicular acclivity, glazed with ice, opposed their actual landing. Many were thrown back upon the ice of the river, which they broke by falling on it, or by which they were severely bruised. It seemed, on hearing the recital given by our friends, as if the Russian river and its banks had lent themselves to assist the French only with reluctance, and, as it were, by mere surprise and compulsion.

But the circumstance which their minds seemed most to recur to, and which they repeated with most horror, was the terror and distraction of the women and the sick, when it was found necessary to abandon with the baggage the remains of their fortune, their provisions, and, in short, all the resources they yet had left against either present or future evils. They observed them, as it were plundering themselves, selecting, rejecting, resuming again, and dropping down on the icy bank of the river, through absolute exhaustion and pain. The recollection of this cruel scene, of so many men scattered over the yawning abyss, of the repeated echoes of their falls, of the shrieks of those who were plunging into the crevices, and above all of the tears of despair from the wounded, who stretched out their hands in supplication from their carriages, which it was impossible to trust to such a feeble support, and conjured their comrades not for ever to abandon them; the recollection of these circumstances still

pressed upon their feelings, and, in fact, still made them shudder with horror.

Their chief then determined to try the passage of a few of the carriages containing these unfortunate beings. But in the middle of the river the ice gave way and opened before them; and those who had arrived on the opposite side heard issuing from this gulf of ruin, first, heart-rending and somewhat prolonged screams of anguish and danger, then short and suffocated groans, which were succeeded by profound and terrific silence. All had disappeared!

Ney fixed his eye on the gulf with a look of consternation, and thought he saw through the darkness an individual object still moving; it was one of the unhappy party; an officer of the name of Brigueville, whom a severe wound in the groin prevented from getting on his feet. One of the flats of ice had kept him up. In a few moments he was seen distinctly, dragging himself on his knees and hands from one piece to another, and approaching the bank. Ney himself received and saved him.

Since the preceding day, four thousand stragglers and three thousand soldiers were either dead or missing; and the cannon and all the baggage lost; and Ney had remaining scarcely three thousand effective men, and as many disbanded ones. At length, when all these sacrifices were completed, and all that had been enabled to cross were collected together, they began their march, and the river, which they had conquered, became then their ally and their guide.

They were proceeding at hazard and in uncertainty, when one of them falling to the ground discovered a beaten road. Indeed it was but too much so; for those in front, on stooping down and applying their hands, as well as eyes to it, stopped in terror and ex-

claimed, "that they saw plainly fresh marks of the passing of a great number of cannon and horses." Thus, then, had they avoided one army of the enemy only to fall into the midst of another! They should be compelled again to fight, when they were scarcely able to march! The war was evidently everywhere around them! But Ney urged them forward; and, without expressing the slightest emotion, pushed on vigorously in the menacing track.

It led to the village of Gusinœ, which they entered unexpectedly. They seized upon every thing. Alas, that they had found wanting, since they left Moscow, was here to be met with. There were inhabitants, provisions, repose, and warm dwellings, besides about a hundred Cossacks, who on awakening found themselves prisoners. Their reports, and the necessity for taking some refreshment, in order to go on, detained Ney in the place for a short time.

About ten o'clock they had reached two other villages, and there they were taking a little rest, when, on a sudden, a number of rapid movements were observed in the surrounding forests. While they were calling one another together, observing these movements, and concentrating themselves in the village which was the nearest of the two to the Borysthenes, some thousands of Cossacks issued from among the trees, and surrounded the unfortunate corps with lances and cannon.

They consisted of Platof and all his hordes, who had followed the right bank of the Borysthenes. They had it in their power to burn the village, discover Ney's weakness, and complete his destruction; but, although it is impossible to say why, they remained motionless for three hours, without even firing. It has been said since, by themselves, that they had received no

orders ; that their chief was not at that moment in a situation to give any ; and that in Russia no one will venture to incur gratuitous responsibility.

The military and firm appearance of Ney kept them in check. Himself and a few soldiers answered this purpose, and he, indeed, ordered, that the rest of his troops should continue their repast and refreshment till night. He then sent round the order for decamping without any noise at midnight, to give each other notice of this in a low voice, and to march in close order. They accordingly, at the time appointed, put themselves in motion all together ; but the first step they took was a signal to the enemy, who discharged all his pieces and moved forward all his squadrons at the same time.

At this report the unarmed stragglers, who still amounted to three or four thousand, were panic-struck: They wandered various ways in confusion and uncertainty, falling back upon the ranks of the armed soldiers, who again drove them forward. Ney kept them as much as possible between his effective troops and the Russians, whose fire was absorbed by these unfortunate victims. The pusillanimous were thus employed to protect the brave.

While on his right flank the marshal was thus using these unfortunate men as a rampart, he regained the banks of the Dnieper, with which he protected his left flank ; he himself marched between them, advancing in this manner from wood to wood, from one waving of the ground to another, availing himself of all its windings, and of its slightest advantages and peculiarities. Frequently, however, he was obliged to remove to some distance from the river, and then Platof surrounded him on every side.

Thus, for two days, and a space of twenty leagues,

were six thousand Cossacks incessantly hovering over the flanks of their column, now reduced to fifteen hundred men in arms, keeping it as it were in a state of siege, disappearing rapidly before its repeated sorties, to return like their Scythian ancestors almost the very moment after ; with this important and fatal difference, however, that they managed their cannon drawn on sledges, and discharged their bullets during their flight, with the same agility and dexterity as their forefathers managed their bows and arrows.

The night brought with it some relief, and at first they felt some portion of joy at being wrapt in darkness ; but even then, if any stopped for an instant to receive the last farewell from those who had fallen from wounds or weakness, they were in danger of losing all traces of those who had gone on. These circumstances occasioned many a cruel moment, many an instant of despair ; they were freed, however, from the grasp of the enemy.

The unfortunate column, in a state more nearly approaching to tranquillity, was proceeding cautiously onward, as it were feeling its way, in a thick wood, when on a sudden, at the distance of only a few paces in its front, a vivid light and several discharges of cannon flashed on the faces of the foremost men. Dreadfully alarmed, they concluded now that it was all over with them, that they should be instantly destroyed, that their hour was at last come, and they fell down in terror ; those behind crowded upon them, and stumbled over them. Ney, who saw that every thing was on the point of being lost, hastened forward, ordered the charge to be sounded, and, as if he had actually foreseen the attack, cried out, " Forward, comrades ! This is the decisive moment ! They are our prisoners." At these words his soldiers who had been



in a state of consternation, now, instead of believing as before that they had themselves been surprised, imagined that they had actually surprised their foes ; the feelings of conquered men were exchanged for those of conquerors ; and they rushed on with ardour against the expected enemy, who, however, was not to be found, but who was heard in rapid flight across the forests.

They hastened on as fast as they were able ; but about ten at night they came to a small stream in a very deep ravine. It was necessary to pass it in single file, as they had passed the Dnieper. The Cossacks, who pursued these unfortunate troops with unabated and intense obstinacy, again discovered them. They turned this impediment to account ; but Ney, by a few discharges of small arms, repulsed them. The troops cleared the passage with difficulty, and within an hour afterwards reached a large village, in which they halted for two hours, in consequence of hunger and exhaustion.

On the next day, the 19th of November, from midnight till ten o'clock in the morning, they proceeded onward, without meeting any other enemy than a mountainous road ; but after they had passed that the columns of Platof reappeared ; and Ney faced about to them, availing himself of the borders of a forest. While daylight continued his soldiers were obliged to submit to see the enemy's balls knocking down the trees which sheltered them, and ploughing up the ground on which they were bivouacking ; for they had nothing but small arms, which were of course unable to keep the artillery of the Cossacks at a sufficient distance.

On the return of night the marshal gave the signal, and they began their march towards Orcha. Already,

during the preceding day, Pchebendowski and fifty horse had been despatched thither to demand assistance; they must have arrived there, unless indeed the enemy had already reached that place.

The officers of Ney concluded with observing, that with respect to the rest of their route, and, although they had certainly in that met with some serious and terrible obstacles, they were not worth relating. They still spoke, however, in the highest terms of their marshal, at the very name of whom they always appeared enthusiastically elated; and their admiration was fully participated; for those who were his equals themselves entertained no idea or feeling of jealousy. He had been too often and too deeply regretted; there was too great a need of sympathetic and friendly feeling to permit the intrusion of that of envy. Moreover, Ney had rendered such a feeling impossible. Throughout the whole of these wonderful achievements, and in the midst of all his glory, his demeanour so little varied from its regular and easy course, that, but from observing the reflection of this glory from the eyes, gestures, and acclamations of all around him, he would not apparently have been aware, that he had performed any thing sublime or extraordinary.

Nor was this enthusiastic feeling the mere effect of sudden and agreeable surprise. Each of the few last days had its distinguished men; among others, the 16th had Eugene; the 17th Mortier; but now all cordially joined in admitting and proclaiming that the great hero of the retreat was Ney.

Orcha is scarcely five days' march from Smolensk. In that short passage, what glory had been acquired! How small a portion of time and space may be sufficient for obtaining immortal renown. What, then, is the nature, what are the elements of those lofty inspi-

rations ; what is the invisible and impalpable germ of those astonishing self-devotions which are developed in a few instants, proceed from a single heart, and are worthy of being diffused throughout duration and space ?

When Napoleon, who was two leagues distant, was apprized that Ney had just reappeared, he absolutely bounded and shouted for joy ; he exclaimed, in tones of transport, "I have saved my eagles then ! To redeem such a man as that from destruction, I would have given three hundred millions out of my treasury !"

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## BOOK XI.

## CHAPTER I.

THE army had thus repassed the Dnieper for the **third** and last time. This river belongs half to Russia, and half to Lithuania, but it rises in the former country. It runs from east to west as far as Orcha, whence its course apparently lies towards Poland; but the heights of Lithuania oppose its progress, and force it to turn abruptly towards the south, where it forms the boundary of the two countries. Kutusof's eighty thousand Russians were stopped by this slight obstacle. Up to this time, they had been spectators rather than authors of our disasters. We saw them no more; and the army was delivered from the torment of witnessing their joy.

Throughout the war, Kutusof was more indebted to his character than to his talents. As long as it was necessary to deceive and to temporize, his crafty mind, his indolence, and his great age were all in his favour; this was no longer the case when circumstances changed, when it became necessary to conduct rapid marches, to pursue, to intercept, and to attack.

From Smolensko, Platof had passed on the right flank of the road, in order to join Wittgenstein. The whole of the war was thus transferred to this side.

On the 22nd, we had a painful march from Orcha

to Borizof, along a wide road, planted on each side with a double row of tall birch-trees, through melted snow, and deep liquid mud. The weakest were lost in it; and those of the wounded, who, believing the frost permanently set in, had changed their carriages for sledges at Smolensk, were detained there, and taken by the Cossacks.

In this state of distress, we witnessed an act of courage worthy of antiquity. Two soldiers of the guard, were cut off from their column by a band of Tartars, who fell upon them with ferocious impetuosity. The one lost his courage and wished to surrender; the other who was fighting called out that he would shoot him, if he was coward enough to yield; and seeing his companion throw down his musket, and hold out his hand to the enemy, he shot him dead in the midst of the Cossacks; then, taking advantage of the consternation into which they were thrown by this action, he instantly reloaded his musket, intimidated those who were advancing upon him, retreated from tree to tree, gained ground, and at length, reached his troop.

It was in the early part of the march towards Borizof, that the report of the taking of Minsk was spread in the army. The countenances even of our leaders betrayed their consternation at this news. Their imaginations, depressed by constant sights of horror, anticipated a still more gloomy future. In their private conversations, many exclaimed, "that Napoleon had led his army to perish at Moscow, just as Charles XII. had sacrificed his in the Ukraine."

Others, however, did not attribute our present misfortunes to this expedition. Without wishing to justify the sacrifices, to which they had consented, in the hope of terminating the war by a single campaign;

they affirmed, that this hope was well-founded ; that, in pushing his line of operations as far as Moscow, Napoleon had given a sufficiently large and solid base to so extended a column. They pointed out the Dwina, the Dnieper, the Ula, and the Berezina, which marked its track from Riga to Bobruisk ; they said, “ that Macdonald, St. Cyr, and de Wrede, that Victor, and Dombrowski, had waited for them there ; that the troops under the command of these generals, with the addition of those of Schwartzenberg and of Augereau, who with fifty thousand men guarded the space between the Elbe and the Niemen, amounted to near two hundred and eighty thousand defensive troops, who from north to south supported a hundred and fifty thousand men in their offensive operations upon the east ;” whence they concluded, “ that the attack upon Moscow, however hazardous it might appear, had been sufficiently prepared, and was worthy of the genius of Napoleon ; that the success of the enterprise was possible ; and that it had only failed from faults of detail.”

They then called to mind our useless losses at Smolensk, the inactivity of Junot at Valoutina, and they maintained, “ that Russia would, nevertheless, have been wholly conquered by the single battle of the Mosqua, if marshal Ney’s first success had been followed up. But that though the enterprise failed militarily from want of decision at that moment, and politically from the fire at Moscow, the army might still have been able to return in health and safety. Since our entrance into this capital, had not the Russian general, and the Russian winter left us, the one forty, the other fifty days, in which to arrange and conduct our retreat ?”

Deploing, then, the rash obstinacy of the affair of  
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Moscow, and the fatal hesitation of that of Malo-Iaroslavetz, they calculated their losses and misfortunes. Since they left Moscow, they had lost all their baggage, five hundred cannon, thirty-one eagles, twenty-seven generals, forty thousand prisoners, and sixty thousand by death: there remained only forty thousand disarmed stragglers, and eight thousand efficient men!

But lastly, they asked, "By what fatality, after this dreadful havoc in their column of attack, the remnant of it, on rejoining the main body which vigorously kept its ground, knew not where to stop, or to take breath? Why they could not concentrate themselves at Minsk and at Wilna, behind the morasses of the Berezina, keep the enemy in check there, at least for a time, and take advantage of the winter to reorganize themselves? but no—all was lost in another place, and from other circumstances. The one fatal error was that of confiding the magazines, and the retreat of the whole of this brave army to an Austrian, and to not having stationed at Wilna or at Minsk, a military leader and a force which might either supply the inefficiency of the Austrian army in presence of the united armies of Moldavia and of Volhynia, or prevent its treachery."

Those who made these complaints were not ignorant of the presence of the duke of Bassano at Wilna; but, in spite of his talents as a minister, and the great confidence the emperor reposed in him, they believed him to be a stranger to the art of war; and that, oppressed by the cares of an important office in administration, and of weighty political business, he was disqualified for the conduct of military affairs. Such were the complaints of those whose sufferings left them any leisure for observation. That a fault had

been committed it was impossible to doubt ; but to say how it might have been avoided, to weigh the value of the motives which led to it in circumstances so extraordinary, and under the conduct of so great a man, is more than we dare attempt. We also know, that in enterprises so gigantic and adventurous, every thing becomes a fault when the end is not obtained.

The treason of Schwartzenberg was, moreover, by no means clear, though if we except the three French generals who were with him, the whole army believed him guilty. They said, " that Walpole was at Vienna as a secret agent from England ; that he and Metternich were the joint authors of the perfidious instructions which Schwartzenberg received. That in compliance with these, ever since the 20th of September, the day of the arrival of Tchitchakof and of the battle of Lutsch, on the Styr, Schwartzenberg had suspended his victorious march, had repassed the Bug, and covered Warsaw by uncovering Minsk ; in compliance with these, he persevered in this false manœuvre ; and after a feeble effort, in the direction of Brezsklitowsky, on the 10th of October, far from taking advantage of the torpor of Tchitchakof to get between him and Minsk, he lost his time in military promenades, and insignificant marches towards Briensk, Byalystock, and Volkowitz. He thus allowed the admiral time to rest, to rally his sixty thousand men, form them into two divisions, leave Sacken to oppose him with one, and set out with the other on the 27th of November to take possession of Minsk, of Borizof, of the magazines, of Napoleon's line of retreat, and of his winter-quarters ; then only did Schwartzenberg put himself in the rear of this hostile movement, which he had received orders to anticipate ; he left Regnier in



front of Sacken, and marched so sluggishly that in a very few days he suffered the admiral to gain five days' march on him.

On the 14th of November, at Volkowitz, Sacken came up with Regnier, cut him off from the Austrian general, and pressed him so closely, that he forced him to call Schwartzenberg to his aid ; who, as if he expected this, instantly fell back, and abandoned Minsk. It is true, that he relieved Regnier, repulsed Sacken, and pursued him to the shores of the Bug ; that he even destroyed the half of his army ; but on the very day of his victory, on the 26th of November, Minsk was taken by Tchitchakof, by which means he afforded Austria a double triumph. Thus appearances were preserved. The new field-marshal fulfilled the wishes of his own government, equally hostile to Russia, whom he had thus enfeebled on the one hand, and to Napoleon, whom, on the other, he betrayed into her power. Such was the cry of almost the whole of the main army. Napoleon said nothing, whether it were that he no longer expected zeal on the part of his ally, or whether he judged it politic to be silent, or that he thought Schwartzenberg had satisfied the demands of honour by the sort of advertisement he had sent to him at Moscow six weeks before. He, nevertheless, addressed some reproaches to the field-marshal. But he was answered by a bitter complaint from the latter, in the first place of the double and contradictory instructions he had received to cover Warsaw and Minsk at the same time, and in the second, of the false intelligence which had been transmitted to him by the duke of Bassano.

"This minister," he said, "had constantly represented to him that the main body of the army was retreating in health, and safety, and that it preserved

its good order, and formidable appearance. Why had they made a fool of him by sending him the bulletins composed to amuse the idlers of Paris? If he had not made more exertions to join the main army, it was because he believed that it did not want assistance." Lastly, he pleaded his own weakness. "How could it be expected that with twenty-eight thousand men he could long keep in check sixty thousand? In such circumstances, if Tchitchakof had gained some marches on him, was it to be wondered at? He had not hesitated to follow him, to separate himself from Galicia, from the point from which he started, from his magazines, from his depôt! If he had not proceeded, it was because Regnier and Durutte, two French generals, had anxiously requested his assistance. Both he and they had reason to hope that Murat, Oudinot, or Victor, would provide for the security of Minsk.

## CHAPTER II.

WE had, in fact, little right to accuse others of treachery, after having so grossly betrayed ourselves. Every body had been wanting in time of need.

At Wilna, no precaution appeared to be taken for our defence; and though, between the Berezina and the Vistula, the garrisons, the depôts, the marching battalions, and the divisions of Durutte, Loison, and Dombrowski might have formed an army at Minsk of thirty thousand men exclusive of the Austrians, an obscure general and three thousand soldiers were the only force stationed there to oppose Tchitchakof's progress. It was even known that this handful of

young soldiers had been exposed in front of a river, upon which the admiral had driven them, while, if they had been posted behind it, it would have served as a temporary defence. Here, as it often happens, faults of detail were consequent upon faults in the general design. The governor of Minsk had been negligently chosen. He was generally reported to be one of those men who undertake every thing, answer for every thing, and fail in every thing. On the 26th of November, he lost this capital, and with it four thousand seven hundred sick, military stores, and two million rations of provisions. It was five days since the report of this disaster reached Dombrowna, and still more calamitous tidings awaited us. This same governor had retired upon Borizof. There he could neither call Oudinot, who was at the distance of two days' march, to his assistance, nor support Dombrowski who hastened from Bobruisk and Igumen. Dombrowski did not arrive at the head of the bridge on the night of the 20th till after the enemy; nevertheless, he drove back the advanced guard of Tchitchakof, he established himself on the bridge, and defended it gallantly until the night of the 21st, when after suffering dreadfully from the Russian artillery, which took him in flank, he was attacked by double his own force, and driven back beyond the river and the town, as far as the Moscow road.

Napoleon did not expect this disaster; he believed he had prevented it by his instructions addressed to Victor from Moscow on the 6th of October. These orders "supposed a brisk attack from Wittgenstein or from Tchitchakof; they recommended Victor to remain within reach of Polotsk and Minsk, to place a prudent and intelligent officer with Schwartzenberg; to keep up a regular correspondence with Minsk, and

to send agents in various directions." But Wittgenstein having made an attack before Tchitchakof, the danger which was nearest and most pressing had become the sole object of attention. Napoleon's wise instructions of the 6th had not been repeated. They appeared to be forgotten by his general. Indeed, when the emperor heard of the loss of Minsk at Dombrowna, he did not himself think Borizof in such imminent danger, since he ordered all his bridge-equipments to be burned the next day at Orcha.

His correspondence with Victor is another proof of his confidence; it supposed that Oudinot would have nearly reached Borizof on the 25th, whereas Tchitchakof took possession of this town on the 21st. It was on the day after this fatal event, at three days' march from Borizof, and on the main road, that an officer met Napoleon with the disastrous news. The emperor striking the earth with his baton, raised his eyes with an expression of fury towards heaven, and exclaimed, "It is then written there, that henceforth every step shall be a fault!"

In the mean while, marshal Oudinot, ignorant of what had happened, and already on his march towards Minsk, stopped on the 21st between Bobr and Krowpki, when general Brownikowski came to him in the middle of the night, to announce his own defeat and that of Dombrowski, the taking of Borizof and the close pursuit of the Russians.

On the 22nd, the marshal marched to meet them, and rallied the remnant of Dombrowski's troops. On the 23rd, three leagues before reaching Borizof, he encountered the Russian advanced guard, which he repulsed, took nine hundred men, fifteen hundred carriages, and drove them back by means of his artillery and of the bayonet as far as the Berezina; but

the remnant of Lambert's troops, in repassing Borizof and this river, destroyed the bridge.

Napoleon was then at Toloczina ; he made some of his officers explain to him the position of Borizof. They assured him, that the Berezina was at that point not merely a river, but a lake of moving ice ; that its bridge was three hundred toises in length, that it was irreparably destroyed, and the passage henceforth impracticable.

At this moment a general of engineers arrived ; he was just returned from the duke of Belluno's corps. Napoleon interrogated him ; the general declared, " that he saw no hope of escape but by forcing a passage through the army of Wittgenstein." The emperor repeated, " that he was determined to discover a line of march in which he should turn his back on every one, on Kutusof, on Wittgenstein, on Tchitchakof." He pointed with his finger on the map to the course of the Berezina, below Borizof, the point at which he wished to cross the river. The general mentioned as an objection the presence of Tchitchakof on its right bank : the emperor then pointed out another line of passage below the first ; then a third still nearer to the Dnieper. Then, seeing that he should approach the country of the Cossacks, he stopped and exclaimed, " Ah, yes ! Pultowa ! Like Charles the Twelfth !" In truth, every misfortune that Napoleon could possibly anticipate had already befallen him, and the sad coincidence between his situation and that of the Swedish conqueror threw him into such an agitation of spirit, that his health was even more shaken than at Malo-Iaroslavetz. Among the words which he then suffered to escape him, these were remarked, " Thus it is, when one heaps fault upon fault !"

These first bursts of emotion were, however, the

only ones which he suffered to escape him; and the *valet-de-chambre* who attended him was the only person who witnessed his agitation. Duroc, Daru, and Berthier declared "that they were ignorant of it; that to them he appeared immovable." And so, in fact, he was as compared with the rest of mankind; for he remained sufficiently master of himself to conceal his anxiety, and the utmost strength of the mind of man, rarely suffices to do more than hide his weakness!

A conversation worthy of remark, which passed that night, will show how critical his situation was, and how he supported it. The night was far advanced, and Napoleon had retired to bed; Duroc and Daru staid in his chamber, and, believing their chief to be asleep, in a low voice, gave vent to the most gloomy forebodings; he heard them, however, and the words "prisoner of state" striking his ear, "What!" exclaimed he, "do you believe they would dare?" Daru was taken by surprise, but, soon recovering himself, answered, "That if they were forced to surrender they must expect the worst; that he had little dependance on the generosity of an enemy; they well knew that state policy erected its own standard of morals, and was bound by no law." "But France!" replied the emperor, "what will she say!" "Ah, as for France," continued Daru, "we might make a thousand conjectures more or less distressing; but we can none of us tell what would happen there."

He then added, "that for the principal officers, as well as for the emperor himself, it would be happy if, through the air, or any other medium, since the passage of the earth seemed shut against them, the emperor could reach France, where he might save them much more certainly than he could by remaining with them." "I only embarrass you then," replied

the emperor, smiling. "Yes, sire." "And you do not wish, then, to be a prisoner of state?" Daru replied in the same strain, "that it would be quite enough for him to be a prisoner of war." Upon which the emperor remained some time silent, when he asked, in a more serious tone, "If all the reports of his ministers were burned?" "Sire, until now, you would not permit it." "Well," he replied, "go and destroy them; for, it must be acknowledged, we are in a calamitous situation."

This was the sole avowal of the kind which his misfortunes extorted from him; and with this confession on his lips he fell asleep; having the power, when necessary, of deferring every thing to the morrow.

His orders were characterized by the same firmness. Oudinot came to announce to him his resolution of repulsing Lambert, which he approved; and urged him to make himself master of a passage over the river either above or below Borizof. He wished that by the 24th the choice of this passage should be made, the preparations begun, and that he might be made acquainted with it, in order that he might adapt his line of march to it. Far from attempting to escape from the three hostile armies by which he was surrounded, he thought only of conquering Tchitchakof, and retaking Minsk.

It is true, that eight hours after, in a second letter to the duke of Reggio, he consented to pass the Berezina near Veselowo, and to retire directly upon Wilna, by Vileika, thus avoiding the Russian admiral.

On the 24th, however, he learned that the only point at which he could attempt this passage was in the neighbourhood of Studzianka, where the river was

fifty-four toises wide, and six feet deep ; and the landing-place on the other side in a marsh, under the fire of a commanding position strongly occupied by the enemy.

### CHAPTER III.

THE hope then of passing between the Russian armies was lost ; and driven as we were by those of Kutusof and of Wittgenstein upon the Berezina, it became necessary to cross this river, in spite of the army of Tchitchakof, which was posted along its bank.

From the 23rd, Napoleon prepared for this as for a desperate action. His first step was to collect all the eagles of the different corps, and to burn them. He formed eighteen hundred of his dismounted guard, of whom eleven hundred and fifty-four were armed with muskets and carbines, into two battalions.

The destruction of the cavalry of the army of Moscow was so tremendous, that Latour-Maubourg had only one hundred and fifty horsemen remaining. The emperor assembled around him all the officers of that service, who were still mounted. He called this troop of about five hundred gentlemen, his *sacred* squadron. Grouchy and Sebastiani had the command of it. Generals of division served in it as captains.

Napoleon also ordered, that all the useless carriages should be burnt, that no officer should keep more than one, that half of the forges and of the carriages of every description belonging to all the corps should be burnt, and the horses be given to the artillery of the guard. The officers of this service were ordered to seize all the draught-horses within



their reach, even those belonging to the emperor, rather than abandon a cannon or a caisson.

He then plunged precipitately into the dark and boundless forest of Minsk, in which a few spots had been cleared for small villages and miserable habitations. It resounded with the report of Wittgenstein's artillery. He came down from the north, accompanied by the winter which seemed to have quitted us with Kutusof, upon the flank of our feeble expiring column. This threatening sound hastened our steps. Forty or fifty thousand men, women, and children, passed through the wood with as much precipitation as their weakness and the slipperiness of the ground would permit.

These forced marches, which began before the break of day, and did not end with its close, dispersed all those who had remained together. They lost themselves in the twofold darkness of the vast forests and the long nights. They halted in the evening, they set out in the morning, in the dark, at random, and without hearing the signal; the remnants of the corps thus became completely disorganized; all were mixed and confounded.

In this last stage of weakness and confusion, as we approached Borizof, loud shouts were heard before us. Some ran forward, believing that we were about to be attacked. It was the army of Victor, which had been tardily pursued by Wittgenstein up to the right side of our route. They were waiting for Napoleon. They were still unbroken in numbers and in spirits, and at the sight of their emperor they broke forth into the customary acclamations, now so long forgotten.

They were ignorant of our disasters, which had

been carefully concealed, even from their leaders. When, instead of the grand column which was to achieve the conquest of Moscow, they perceived behind Napoleon only a band of spectres covered with rags, women's pelisses, bits of carpet, or with dirty cloaks scorched and burnt by the fire of the bivouacs, and with feet wrapped in the most wretched tatters, they were struck with consternation. They looked with affright upon the miserable and emaciated soldiers, whose harassed and squalid faces were covered with hideous beards, who were unarmed, marching without shame and without order, hanging their heads, and fixing their eyes on the earth in silence like a troop of captives.

But what most astonished them, was the sight of so many straggling and isolated field-officers, who appeared to be occupied only in securing the remnant of their property, or providing for their personal safety. They marched indiscriminately with the soldiers, who seemed not to see them; they had no orders to give, no obedience to expect; all ties were broken, all distinctions of rank obliterated by the common misery.

The soldiers of Victor and of Oudinot could not believe their eyes. Their officers shed tears of compassion over those of their comrades whom they recognised in the crowd. After sharing with them their food and their clothing, they inquired, "Where was the body of the army? When it was pointed out to them, and, instead of so many thousands of men, they beheld only a small band of officers and subaltern officers around their chief, their eyes still wandered in search of the remainder.

So disastrous a sight had an immediate effect on the discipline and firmness of the 2nd and 9th corps.

Insubordination, of all evils the most contagious, rapidly spread ; for it seems as if order were a perpetual struggle against nature.

And yet the unarmed, the dying even, though they were not ignorant that they must make their way across a river, and through a new enemy, still doubted not of victory.

It was, indeed, but the shade of an army ; but it was the shade of the grand army. It felt itself conquered by nature alone. The sight of their emperor rekindled their courage. They had, for a long time, accustomed themselves to look to him not for life but for victory.

This was their first unfortunate campaign ; and so many had been fortunate ! All that was wanted was strength to follow him ; he, alone, who had raised his soldiers to such a height, and precipitated them so low, could save them. He was still, in the midst of his army, like hope in the heart of man.

And thus, surrounded by men who might have reproached him with their sufferings, he marched without fear ; speaking to them all without restraint or affectation, in full confidence that their respect for him would endure as long as their respect for glory. He knew well that he belonged to us as much as we belonged to him, and that his renown was the property of the nation. Every man would rather have turned his arms against himself ; which indeed many did ; it was the less suicide of the two.

Some crawled to fall and die at his feet, and even in the ravings of delirium, they implored, but never reproached. In fact, did he not take part in the common danger ? Of all of us, who risked so much as he did ? Who lost the most by our disasters ?

If there were any imprecations, they were not heard

when he was present. Of all our misfortunes, the greatest was still that of displeasing him; so inveterate were our confidence in, and submission to, the man who had made the world submit to us; whose genius, till now always victorious, always infallible, had taken the place of our own free will, and who had so long dispensed not only pensions and distinctions, but reputation, that he had had wherewithal to satisfy the aspirations of the generous as well as the cravings of the covetous.

#### CHAPTER IV.

WE were now approaching the most critical moment; Victor was on our rear, with fifteen thousand men; and Oudinot in advance, and already on the Berezina with five thousand; the emperor was midway between them with seven thousand effective men, forty thousand stragglers, and an enormous mass of baggage and artillery belonging, for the most part, to the 2nd and 9th corps.

On the 25th, some hesitation was perceptible in his march just as he was on the point of reaching the Berezina. He stopped on the high road every minute, waiting for night to conceal his arrival from the enemy, and to give time to the duke of Reggio to evacuate Borizof.

On entering this town, on the 23rd, that marshal had found a bridge of three hundred toises in length, broken in three places. The presence of the enemy made it impossible to repair it. He had learned that on descending the river for two miles on his left he would find a ford near Oukoholda, but it was deep and

unsafe. A mile above Borizof, Stadhof marked another ford that was hardly practicable. For two days he had known that Studzianka, two leagues above Stadhof, was a third point at which the river was passable.

This information he owed to Corbineau's brigade, the same that de Wrede had separated from the 2nd corps, near Smolian. That Bavarian general had kept it as far as Doksitzzi, where he had sent it back again to the 2nd corps by way of Borizof.

Corbineau found Tchitchakof master of that town. Being forced to make a retrograde movement along the Berezina, he had hidden himself in the forest on its banks. He could not discover any point at which to pass the river, when he perceived a Lithuanian peasant, whose horse appeared as if he had just come out of the river, being still wet. He had seized this man, compelled him to act as guide, and had passed the river behind him, at a ford immediately opposite to Studzianka. He afterwards regained Oudinot, and showed him this way of escape.

As it was Napoleon's intention to retire immediately upon Wilna, the marshal soon discovered that this passage was both the most direct and the least dangerous. It had been reconnoitred; and, even if the infantry and artillery should be too much pressed by Kutusof and Wittgenstein, and should not have time to cross the river by the bridges, it was certain that there was, at least, a tried ford, which the emperor and the cavalry could pass; that thus all would not be lost in peace as well as in war, as would be the case if Napoleon remained in the power of the enemy.

Accordingly the marshal did not hesitate. From the night of the 23rd, the general of artillery, a com-

pany of pontoniers, a regiment of infantry, and Corbineau's brigade, occupied Studzianka. At the same time, the two other passages were reconnoitred. All of them were found closely watched. The question then was how to deceive and to dislodge the enemy; nothing could be done by force, he therefore resorted to stratagem. Three hundred men, and some hundreds of stragglers, were sent on the 24th towards Oukoholda, with instructions to collect, with the greatest possible noise, all the materials necessary for the construction of a bridge. The division of cuirassiers also defiled with great parade on the same side, in sight of the enemy.

Besides this, Lorence, general-in-chief of the état-major, ordered several Jews to be brought to him; he interrogated them with an affected ignorance about the ford, and the road leading from thence to Minsk. Then, appearing perfectly satisfied with their answers, and pretending to be convinced that there was no better passage, he engaged some of these traitors as guides, and had the others conducted beyond our outposts. But to make sure that these men would not keep their word, he made them swear that they would meet us again in the direction of Lower Berezina, to inform us of the movements of the enemy.

Whilst we thus drew the whole attention of Tchitchakof to our left, we secretly made preparations at Studzianka for crossing the river. Eblé did not arrive till five on the evening of the 25th, and was followed only by two field-forges, two waggons of coals, six chests of tools and nails, and a few companies of pontoniers. At Smolensk, he had made every man take with him a tool and several clamps. But the piles which had been formed the preceding evening of the beams of the Polish huts, were found too weak. It

was necessary to begin the work again. It now became impossible to finish the bridge during the night; it could only be completed during the day of the 26th, and under the enemy's fire. But there was no time for hesitation.

As soon as this decisive night closed in, Oudinot resigned to Napoleon the occupation of Borizof; and took up his position with the rest of his corps, at Studzianka. They marched in perfect darkness, and without noise; the men mutually exhorted each other to keep the most profound silence.

At eight o'clock in the evening, Oudinot and Dombrowski took possession of the heights which commanded the passage, at the same time that Eblé quitted them. That general posted himself on the edge of the river, with his pontoniers, and a caisson full of iron from the wheels of deserted carriages, out of which with great risk and difficulty he had forged cramp-irons. They had sacrificed every thing to preserve this apparently small resource. It saved the army.

At the close of the night of the 25th, he drove the first pile into the muddy bed of the river. But to complete our misfortunes, the waters had risen, and had obliterated the ford. Incredible exertions were required—our unfortunate pontoniers were obliged to stand up to their necks in water, and to struggle against the masses of ice which the stream drove along. Many perished from cold, or sunk under the flakes of ice which were drifted by a violent wind.

They had every thing to overcome except the enemy. The cold was just at that point which rendered the crossing of the river most difficult, without arresting its course, or consolidating the moving ground upon which we had to tread. Under these circumstances,

the elements appeared more hostile to us than the Russians. Their climate did its part, if they had done theirs. The French worked all night by the light of the enemy's fires, which gleamed on the heights on the other side of the river, within the range of the guns and of the musketry of the division of Tchaplitz, who sent to inform his general-in-chief of our operations, the object of which he could no longer doubt.

## CHAPTER V.

THE presence of a division of the enemy took from us all hope of having deceived the Russian admiral. We expected every moment to hear all his artillery open upon our artificers, and even though our labours should remain undiscovered until daylight, the work could not be sufficiently advanced to make it of any use ; the river on the opposite side was low, and so entirely commanded by the position Tchaplitz had taken up, that it was impossible for us to force a passage. Napoleon therefore set out from Borizof, at ten o'clock at night, in the full expectation of encountering a desperate shock. He established himself with the six thousand four hundred guards who remained with him at Staroi-Borizof, in a house belonging to prince Radziwil, on the right of the road from Borizof to Studzianka, and at an equal distance from these two points.

He passed the remainder of this decisive night without retiring to rest, going out every moment to listen or to inspect the passage where his fate was to be decided. So tediously did the night wear away under the pressure of his intense anxiety, that he



thought every hour brought with it the approach of day, and was with difficulty convinced of his mistake.

The darkness was scarcely dissipated, when he joined Oudinot. The presence of danger calmed him ; as was always the case. But at the sight of the Russian fires, which marked their position, his most determined generals, such as Rapp, Mortier, and Ney, exclaimed, " That if the emperor escaped from the perils which now surrounded him, they must indeed believe in his protecting star." Even Murat confessed that it was time to relinquish the thought of every thing but of saving the emperor, the means of which were proposed by some Poles.

The emperor waited for day in one of the houses by the river-side, on a steep on which Oudinot had planted his artillery. Murat gained admittance, and declared to his brother-in-law, " that he looked upon the passage as impracticable ; he pressed him to save himself, while it was yet in his power. He told him that he might cross the Berezina some leagues above Studzianka without danger ; in five days he would be in Wilna ; that some brave and devoted Poles, who knew all the roads, offered themselves as his conductors ; and pledged themselves for his safety."

Napoleon rejected this with disdain, as a proposal for a shameful and cowardly flight : he was indignant that any one should have dared to believe him capable of deserting his army in the moment of danger. He showed no displeasure however against Murat, either because that prince had thus offered him an opportunity of displaying his firmness, or because he saw in his proposition a strong proof of his devotion to his person—a quality above all others valuable and meritorious in the eyes of sovereigns. Day now dawned, and the Russian fires gradually grew paler, and at

length disappeared. Our troops took their arms, the artillery-men ranged themselves by their guns, the generals watched the enemy's movements—all stood in the silence of intense expectation and impending danger, with their eyes rivetted to the opposite bank. From the preceding evening every stroke of our pontoniers, resounding along the woody heights, must have drawn the attention of the enemy. The dawn of the 26th exhibited to us his battalions and artillery ranged before the weak scaffolding which Eblé still wanted eight hours to complete.

We did not doubt but that they waited only for day, to direct their fire with greater certainty. It appeared: we saw the fires abandoned, the bank deserted, and on the heights thirty pieces of artillery in retreat. A single shot from his guns would have been sufficient to annihilate the slight boarding thrown from bank to bank, on which our safety depended; but his artillery fell back, in proportion as ours assumed a defensive attitude. Farther off we perceived the rear of a long column filing off towards Borizof, without looking behind them; a regiment of infantry and twelve field-pieces remained in front of us, but without taking up any position; and we saw a horde of Cossacks hovering on the skirts of the wood. They were the rear-guard of Tchaplitz's division, six thousand strong, which thus retired, as if to leave us a free passage.

The French scarcely dared to believe their eyes, But, at length, they clapped their hands, and shouted with joy. Rapp and Oudinot precipitately entered the apartment of the emperor; "Sire," they exclaimed, "the enemy has raised his camp, and abandoned his station!" "It is impossible!" replied the emperor: the news was, however, soon confirmed by Ney and

Murat. Napoleon darted from his head-quarters, he looked, and saw the last files of Tchaplitz's column retire and disappear in the wood. In a transport of joy, he exclaimed, "I have deceived the admiral!"

At this moment, two of the enemy's field-pieces reappeared and fired. An order was given to drive them back by returning their fire. A single shot was sufficient; this imprudence was soon checked, for fear of calling back Tchaplitz, as the bridge was scarcely begun; it was eight o'clock, and they were only driving the first piles.

But the emperor, impatient to take possession of the other side of the river, pointed it out to the bravest of his officers. Jacqueminot, aide-de-camp to the duke of Reggio, and the Lithuanian count, Predziczki, rushed foremost into the water, and in spite of the ice, which cut and wounded the chests and flanks of their horses, they gained the opposite ground. They were followed by Sourd, chief of a squadron, and fifty chasseurs of the 7th, carrying some light-infantry men behind them, and by two slight rafts, which transported four hundred men, making the passage twenty times.

The emperor was desirous of taking a prisoner, that he might question him. Jacqueminot, having heard him express this wish, was scarcely out of the water, when he rushed on one of Tchaplitz's soldiers, attacked him, disarmed him, seized him, and placing him on the bow of the saddle, carried him across the ice and the water to Napoleon.

In about an hour, the bank was cleared of the Cossacks, and the bridge for the infantry finished; Legrand's division crossed it rapidly with its artillery, amid shouts of "*Vive l'Empereur*," and under the eye

of their sovereign, who himself assisted in the passage of the artillery by the powerful encouragement of his words and his example.

On reaching the opposite shore, he exclaimed, "My star then still reigns !" for he had the belief in fatalism common to all conquerors. Men in their situation, having had the longest account with fortune, best know how much they owe to her ; and, conscious of no intermediate power between themselves and heaven, they feel themselves more directly under its influence.

## CHAPTER VI.

At this juncture, a Lithuanian nobleman, disguised as a peasant, arrived at Wilna, with the intelligence of Schwartzenberg's victory over Sacken.

Napoleon loudly proclaimed this success ; adding that " Schwartzenberg had returned instantly on Tchitchakof's traces, and that he was hastening to our assistance." A conjecture, which the disappearance of Tchaplitz made very probable.

However, the first bridge, which was just finished, had been constructed only for the use of infantry ; a second, a hundred toises higher up, for the artillery and the baggage, was immediately begun. It was not finished till four o'clock in the evening. At the same time, the remainder of the 2nd corps, and Dombrowski's division, followed general Legrand and the duke of Reggio. They were nearly seven thousand men.

The first care of the marshal was to make himself certain of the road to Zembin, which he did by a detachment which dislodged some Cossacks ; and in

the next place, to push the enemy upon Borizof, and to keep him in check, as far as possible, from the passage of Studzianka.

Tchaplitz persevered in his obedience to the admiral, as far as Stakhowa, a village in the neighbourhood of Borizof. He then returned, and made head against Oudinot's advanced troops, commanded by Albert. Both parties halted. The French finding themselves at a sufficient distance, only wished to gain time; and the Russian general waited for orders.

Tchitchakof found himself in one of those difficult situations, in which the mind wanders over many points at once, uncertain which to prefer, and has no sooner decided and fixed itself upon one, than some new consideration unsettles and inclines it towards another.

His march from Minsk on Borizof in three columns, not only by the high road but by the roads of Antonopolia, Logaisk, and Zembin, showed that his whole attention was at first directed to that part of the Berezina above Borizof. When, afterwards, his left was strengthened, he thought only of the weakness of his right, and all his anxiety was directed to that quarter.

The error, which led him into this wrong direction, had many other sources. Kutusof's instructions made him especially responsible for this point. Hoertel, who commanded twelve thousand men near Bobruisk, refused to leave his cantonments to follow Dombrowski, and to defend this part of the river; he alleged the danger of a disease among his horses, a pretext unheard of, improbable, but true, and which Tchitchakof himself afterwards confirmed.

The admiral adds, that some intelligence given by Wittgenstein drew his attention still more anxiously

towards lower Berezina, as did also the natural supposition that the presence of that general on the right flank of the main body of the army, and above Borizof, would drive Napoleon below this town.

The recollection of Charles XII, and the thought of Davoust, at Berezino, might also have influenced him. By following this direction, Napoleon would not only avoid Wittgenstein, but would retake Minsk, and join Schwartzenberg. This might also be a consideration for Tchitchakof, who was the conqueror of Minsk, and the especial adversary of Schwartzenberg. Lastly, and above all, the false demonstrations of Oudinot towards Ucholoda, and, in all probability, the report of the Jews determined him.

The admiral, thus completely deceived, resolved on the evening of the 25th to descend the Berezina, at the same moment that Napoleon had determined to ascend it. It seemed as if the French emperor had prompted the enemy's resolution, fixed the very hour of its adoption, the precise instant, and all the details of its execution. Both left Borizof at the same moment; Napoleon for Studzianka, and Tchitchakof for Szabaszawiczy, thus turning their backs on each other as if by mutual consent. The admiral recalled all the troops he had posted above Borizof, with the exception of a small corps of observation, and did not even give orders for the breaking up of the roads.

Yet it was not more than five or six leagues from Szabaszawiczy to the passage which was preparing. From the morning of the 26th, he would inevitably have been informed of it. The bridge of Borizof was not three hours' march from the point of attack. He had left fifteen thousand men be-

fore this bridge ; he might then return in person to this point, rejoin Tchaplitz at Stackowa, and on the same day even attack, or at least prepare to attack, and the next day, the 27th, with his eighteen thousand men defeat the seven thousand soldiers of Oudinot and Dombrowski ; in short, retake, in sight of the emperor and of Studzianka, the position which Tchaplitz had quitted the preceding evening.

But great faults are seldom promptly repaired ; whether it be that we at first delude ourselves into doubting whether they are really committed, and can only be brought to confess them by perfect conviction, or whether, in the agitation and distrust they occasion, we hesitate and want to rely on the advice and assistance of others.

The admiral thus lost the remainder of the 26th, and the whole of the 27th, in consultations, in feeling his way, and in preparations. The presence of Napoleon and of the main army, whose weakness it was difficult for him to conceive or appreciate, dazzled him. He saw the emperor everywhere ; before him on his right, on account of the feint he made of passing the river ; in front of his centre, at Borizof, because in fact our whole army arriving in successive detachments in that town filled it with bustle ; and lastly, at Studzianka, in front of his left, where the emperor really was.

On the 27th, he was still so possessed by this error that he reconnoitred, and attacked Borizof with his chasseurs, who passed over the beams of the bridge, which had been burned, and who were repulsed by the soldiers of Partouneaux's division.

On the same day, whilst Tchitchakof was thus feeling his way, Napoleon, with about six thousand of the guards, and Ney's corps now reduced to six

hundred men, passed the Berezina about two o'clock in the afternoon; he posted himself in Oudinot's reserve, and guarded the entrance to the bridges against any further attempts on the part of Tchitchakof.

A crowd of stragglers and baggage had preceded him: many of the soldiers followed him across the river whilst daylight lasted. Victor's division, at the same time, took up the position the guard had quitted on the heights of Studzianka.

## CHAPTER VII.

UP to this time our retreat went on well. But Victor on his way through Borizof, left Partouneaux and his division, with orders to keep the enemy in the rear of the town, to drive onward the numerous stragglers who had taken shelter there, and to rejoin him before the end of the day. Partouneaux now for the first time saw the disorder which prevailed in the main body of the army. He endeavoured, as Davoust had done at the beginning of the retreat, to conceal the traces of this confusion from Kutusof's Cossacks, who were in his rear. This vain attempt, the attacks of Platof by the high road from Orcha, and those of Tchitchakof by the burnt bridge of Borizof, detained him in the town till the close of the day. He was just preparing to quit it when he received the emperor's express orders to remain through the night. Napoleon, doubtless, thought that he should thus fix the attention of three Russian generals upon Borizof, and that while Partouneaux detained them on that



point he should have time to effect his passage. But Wittgenstein had left Platof to follow the French army along the high road, and had himself taken a direction more to the right.

He arrived the same evening on the heights above the Berezina, between Borizof and Studzianka, cut off the communication between these two points, and took possession of all he found there. Partouneaux soon discovered, by the tide of stragglers which rolled back towards him, that he was separated from the rest of the army. He did not hesitate. Though he had only three pieces of artillery and three thousand five hundred soldiers, he instantly resolved on cutting his way through the enemy, made the necessary dispositions, and set out on his march.

He had to advance along a slippery road, encumbered with baggage and deserters, in the teeth of a violent wind, and through a dark and a frosty night. In a short time the fire of several thousand of the enemy's troops, posted along the heights on his right, added to his former difficulties. As long as the attack was directed only against his side, he pursued his march ; but it was soon transferred to his front, by numerous and well-posted troops whose fire raked his column from end to end.

This ill-fated division was now engaged in a hollow ; a long train of five or six hundred carriages embarrassed all its movements ; seven thousand bewildered stragglers, yelling with terror and despair, rushed into its feeble lines. They broke the ranks, threw the platoons into disorder, and every moment infected fresh soldiers with their own panic. Partouneaux was compelled to fall back, that he might rally and take up a better position ; but on doing this, he fell in with Platof's cavalry.

Half of our men had already fallen, and the fifteen hundred who remained saw themselves surrounded by three armies and a river. In this situation a trumpet was sent by Wittgenstein at the head of fifty thousand Russians to summon the French to lay down their arms. Partouneaux rejected the summons. He called into the ranks all those stragglers who still had their arms; he wished to make a last effort, and to cut himself a bloody passage to the bridges of Studzianka; but these men, once so brave, seemed not to know the use of arms, so utterly were they degraded by suffering.

At the same time, the general of his advanced guard came to tell him that the bridges of Studzianka were on fire; an aide-de-camp, named Rochex, brought this intelligence, and declared that he saw them burning. Partouneaux believed this false report, for misfortune is credulous of evil. He gave himself up as deserted, sacrificed; and as the night, the numerous obstacles, and the necessity of presenting a front to the enemy on three sides at once, separated his feeble brigades, he gave orders to each of them to try to get off, under favour of the darkness, along the enemy's flanks. He himself, with one of these brigades, reduced to four hundred men, mounted the steep and wooded heights on the right, in the hope of crossing Wittgenstein's army, escaping from him, rejoining Victor, or turning the Berezina at its source.

But wherever he tried to pass, he encountered the enemy's fire, and was obliged to turn back again; he wandered at random for several hours over plains of snow, through a furious hurricane. At every step he saw his soldiers stricken by cold, extenuated by hunger and fatigue, falling half-dead into the hands

of the Russian cavalry, who pursued them without intermission or mercy. This unfortunate general still struggled against the heavens, the enemy and his own despair, when he felt the earth itself fail beneath his feet. Deceived by the snow, he had got upon the half-formed ice of a lake, which now seemed about to swallow him up—then only did he yield, and surrender his arms.

While this catastrophe was accomplished, his three other brigades, became so thickly crowded together on the road, as to lose all power of manœuvring. They, however, held out till the following day, first by fighting, and then by a parley; at length, they yielded in their turn; common misfortune reunited them to their general.

Out of all this division, only one battalion escaped; it had been left the last in Borizof. It marched out of the town through the troops of Platof and Tchitchakof, who at that very time and place were effecting the junction between the armies of Moscow and of Moldavia. It seemed as if this battalion, being alone and separated from its division, must be the first to fall; yet it was that very circumstance which saved it. Long trains of baggage-waggons and scattered soldiers fled towards Studzianka in various directions. Carried along by one of these crowds, mistaking his way, and leaving on his right the road the army had taken, the commander of this battalion glided down to the banks of the river, followed all its windings, and, favoured by the combat in which his less fortunate comrades were engaged, by the darkness, and even by the difficulties of the ground, he silently marched on, escaped the enemy, and brought Victor a confirmation of the loss of Partouneaux.

When Napoleon heard this news, he exclaimed

with an expression of intense grief, "When we seemed to have been saved by a miracle, must this defection happen to spoil all?" The expression was improper, but it was wrung from him by acute distress, either because he foresaw that Victor would not be able to hold out long enough on the morrow, or because he had made it a point of honour during the whole course of the retreat, to leave none but stragglers and no armed and organized body in the enemy's hands. Partouneaux's division was, in fact, the first and only one which laid down its arms.

## CHAPTER VIII.

WITTGENSTEIN was encouraged by this success. At the same time, two days spent in reconnoitring and in feeling his way, the report of a prisoner, and the intelligence of the retaking of Borizof by Platof, had enlightened Tchitchakof as to the true state of affairs.

From this time, the three Russian armies from the north, the east and the south felt that they were acting in concert. The leaders now kept up a regular communication. There was a mutual jealousy between Wittgenstein and Tchitchakof; but this was exceeded by their detestation of us; common hatred, and not friendship, was the bond of union between them. These generals were now prepared for a simultaneous attack upon the bridges of Studzianka on both sides of the river.

It was the 28th of November; the main army had had two days and two nights for their retreat; if they had improved this time the Russians would have

arrived too late. But the French camp was in utter confusion, and the two bridges were incomplete for want of materials. Twice, during the night of the 26th, that appropriated to the carriages was broken, and the passage consequently retarded by seven hours; it broke a third time about four o'clock on the afternoon of the 27th. To add to the confusion, the stragglers dispersed through the woods and surrounding villages had not taken advantage of the first night, and on the 27th at the daybreak all advanced together to cross the bridges at the same time. This was more especially the case when the guards, whose movements regulated those of the rest, proceeded to cross. Their departure was the signal for the remainder to rush together from all parts. They crowded to the shore. In an instant they formed a dense, wide, and confused mass of men, horses, and waggons, besieging the narrow entrance to the bridge before them. The foremost, pushed onward by those behind them, and driven back by the pontoniers and the guards, or stopped by the river, were crushed and trodden under foot or precipitated among the floating ice of the Berezina. From this immense and horrible crowd there arose one while an indistinct murmur, at another a violent clamour, mingled with groans and the most dreadful imprecations.

The efforts of Napoleon and his principal officers to save these bewildered men by reestablishing order among them were long fruitless. The confusion was so great, that at about two o'clock, when the emperor advanced to cross, it was necessary to open a passage for him by force. One corps of the grenadiers of the guard and Latour-Maubourg were deterred by compassion from cutting their way through these wretched beings.

The village of Zamioski, situated in the midst of the woods, at the distance of a league from Studzianka, formed the imperial head-quarters. Eblé had just finished counting the carriages which covered the shore. He told the emperor, "that there were more than could cross in six days. Ney, who was present, exclaimed, "that they must then be burnt immediately." But Berthier, prompted by the evil genius which presides in courts, opposed this. He asserted, "that they were far from being reduced to this extremity as yet."

The emperor chose to believe him, both from a leaning towards the opinion most flattering to himself, and from consideration for so many, with whose misfortunes he had to reproach himself, and whose food and small remaining property were contained in these carriages.

During the night of the 27th, the tumult was checked by a disorder of another kind. The bridges were entirely deserted; all the stragglers thronged back to the village of Studzianka. In an instant it was torn to pieces, it completely disappeared, and was converted into an infinity of bivouacs. Around these, hunger and cold rivetted these wretched sufferers. It was impossible to tear them away. Another night was therefore lost.

Meanwhile, Victor, with six thousand men, defended them against Wittgenstein. But at the first dawn of the 28th, when they saw that marshal preparing for battle, when they heard Wittgenstein's cannon thundering over their heads, and Tchitchakof's at the same time growling on the opposite bank, they all rose at once, ran down the hill, and returned in a tumultuous mass to besiege the bridges.

Their terror was well-founded. Many of these

unhappy beings were not destined to behold another day. Wittgenstein and Platof, with forty thousand Russians of the army of the north and of the east, attacked the heights of the left side, which Victor defended with only six thousand men.

At the same time, Tchitchakof, with his twenty-seven thousand Russians of the army of the south, had come upon Oudinot, Ney and Dombrowski from Stackowa.

These generals scarcely numbered eight thousand men in their ranks, which were supported by the old and young guard, then consisting of two thousand eight hundred bayonets and nine hundred sabres.

The two Russian armies attempted to seize on the opposite entrances to the bridges at the same moment, together with all who had not been able to reach the other side of the marshes of the Zembin. Above sixty thousand men, well clothed, well fed, and completely armed, attacked eighteen thousand half-naked, ill-armed, famished men, separated by a river, surrounded by morasses, and encumbered by more than fifty thousand stragglers, sick and wounded, and by an enormous mass of baggage. For two days the cold and misery were so intense, that the old guard lost a third, and the young guard one-half of their effective men.

This circumstance, combined with the destruction of Partouneaux's division, explain the frightful reduction in Victor's corps, notwithstanding which, that marshal kept Wittgenstein in check during the whole of the 28th. Tchitchakof was actually beaten. Marshal Ney and his eight thousand French, Swiss, and Poles, made head against twenty-seven thousand Russians.

The admiral's attack was slow and languid. His

guns swept the road, but he had not courage to follow his own shot, and to penetrate through the gap they made in our ranks. In front of his right, however, the legion of the Vistula gave way before the attack of a strong column. On this occasion, Oudinot, Dombrowski, and Albert were wounded. Claparede and Kosikowski experienced the same fate; anxiety and alarm became universal. But Ney appeared; he darted through the whole of the woods upon the flank of the Russian column. Dourmerc, and his cavalry who broke the column, took two thousand men, sabred the rest, and by this vigorous charge decided the combat, which was long doubtful.

Tchitchakof, vanquished by Ney, was driven back upon Stackowa. Most of the officers of the second corps were wounded, the smaller the number of troops the greater was the demand for individual exertion, the greater the individual risk. Many officers were seen to seize the muskets of their wounded soldiers. Among the losses that of the young Noailles, Berthier's aide-de-camp, was remarked. A ball struck him dead. He was one of those meritorious, but too ardent officers who are prodigal of their lives, and who seem sufficiently rewarded by being employed.

During the engagement, Napoleon remained with his guard as a reserve at Brilowa, covering the entrance to the two bridges, between the two battles which were going on, but nearest to that in which Victor was engaged. That marshal, although attacked in a very perilous position and by a force quadruple his own, lost very little ground. The right of this main body, which was mutilated by the loss of Partouneaux's division, rested on the river. It was supported by one of the emperor's batteries placed on the



other bank. His front was protected by a ravine, his left was uncovered, unsupported and lost in the high plain of Studzianka.

Wittgenstein did not make his first attack till ten o'clock in the morning of the 28th, across the road to Borizof, and along the course of the Berezina, which he tried to ascend as high as our passage, but our right wing stopped him, and kept him for a long time in check out of the reach of the bridges. He then deployed and attacked the whole of Victor's front, but without success. One of his advancing columns tried to cross the ravine, but was attacked and cut off.

At length, about the middle of the day, the Russian general discovered his own superiority; he attacked our left wing. All would now have been lost, but for the exertions of Fournier, and the intrepidity of Latour-Maubourg, who was crossing the bridges with his cavalry. He perceived the danger, immediately faced about, and arrested the enemy's progress by a sanguinary charge.

Night came on before Wittgenstein's forty thousand Russians had succeeded in making any impression on the duke of Belluno's six thousand. He remained master of the heights of Studzianka, and still protecting the bridges from the Russian bayonets, though he could not cover them from the artillery of their left wing.

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## CHAPTER IX.

**DURING** the whole of this day, the position of the ninth corps was rendered extremely critical by its having no other refuge than a frail and narrow bridge, the approaches to which were obstructed by stragglers and baggage waggons. As the battle became hotter, the disorder of these unfortunate people was increased by terror. They were alarmed by the first confused sounds of a serious engagement, then by the sight of the wounded who were brought off the field, and lastly by the shot from the batteries on the left of the Russians which fell among their tumultuous mass. They had already crowded upon each other, and this immense multitude heaped together pell-mell with horses and waggons on the bank formed a frightful clog upon our movements.

About the middle of the day the first shot from the enemy's batteries fell amidst this chaotic mass. This was the signal for universal desperation. Then, as in all extreme circumstances, men's hearts were laid bare, and acts of the lowest infamy and of the sublimest heroism were exhibited. Some, with relentless fury, cut themselves a dreadful passage, sword in hand. Others forced a still more cruel way for their carriages. They drove them mercilessly over the crowd of wretched beings whom they crushed in their course. With atrocious avarice they sacrificed their companions in misfortune to the preservation of their baggage. Others in a state of terror at once pitiable and disgusting wept, supplicated, and fell prostrate and powerless from fear. Some, more especially among the sick and wounded, were seen abandoning all struggles

for life, retiring from the crowd, and sitting down apart in calm and utter hopelessness, with their glazed eyes fixed upon the snow which was shortly to become their grave.

Many of those who had rushed foremost into this desperate crowd missed the bridge, and tried to scale it from its sides; almost all of them were thrown down into the river. There were seen amid the ice-flakes, mothers with their infants in their arms, struggling to raise them above the torrent in proportion as they felt themselves sinking; some were already under water, yet their stiffened arms were still outstretched with the vain attempt to save their children.

To complete the confusion and horror, the bridge for the artillery cracked and broke. The column which was in the act of crossing this narrow passage tried in vain to retreat. The crowd which pressed on from behind, unconscious of the disaster, and deaf to the cries of those before them, pushed forward and precipitated them into the chasm into which they were soon thrown in their turn.

The whole stream was at length diverted to the other bridge. A number of large caissons, heavy carriages and field pieces, flocked to it from all parts. Urged on by their drivers, and carried rapidly down a frozen and rugged declivity, through the thick of this mass of human beings, they crushed the unfortunate wretches who happened to be caught between them; then, meeting with a heavy shock, most of them were overturned with violence, and knocked down all around them in their fall. Whole ranks of men driven in desperate terror by these conflicting obstacles got entangled with them, were thrown down and crushed by other ranks who rushed on to the same fate in frightful and ceaseless succession.

Thus did the fearful torrent roll on, wave over wave ;—nothing was heard but cries of rage, and agony, and despair. In this horrible conflict, those who were thrown down, trampled on and stifled, still struggled under the feet of their comrades which they seized with their teeth and their nails. They were shaken off and trodden down without mercy, as if they had been enemies. Among them were wives and mothers vainly calling, with screams of agony, on their husbands and their children, from whom one instant had severed them for ever. They stretched out their arms to them, they supplicated to be allowed to pass, to rejoin those they had lost ; but carried to and fro by the crowd, tossed among these human waves, they fell without being even perceived. Amid the fearful din formed by the roar of a furious hurricane, the thunder of artillery, the whistling of the tempestuous wind, the hissing of bullets, the bursting of shells, the shouts, groans, and frightful imprecations of fierce and despairing men, this tumultuous mass heard not the wailings of the victims over whom it rolled.

The most fortunate gained the bridge, but not without trampling on still breathing heaps of wounded, of women and children thrown down and half suffocated. When at length they reached the narrow defile they thought themselves saved, but every moment a fallen horse, a broken or displaced plank stopped the whole line.

There was also a morass just on the other side of the bridge, in which a great many horses and carriages had stuck fast, and still farther embarrassed and retarded the passage. In the column of desperate beings who crowded upon this solitary passage for escape, there now arose an infernal struggle ; the weak, and those

whose footing was insecure, were pushed into the river by the strong who, lost to every thing but the mere instinct of self-preservation, pushed furiously onwards to their end, without looking to the right or left, and indifferent to the curses of rage and despair with which they were followed by their comrades or their officers, whom they sacrificed.

But in the midst of this sickening spectacle, there were some instances of the most heroic humanity and self-devotion, which deserve a more faithful and detailed description than is suited to this time or place. Privates and even officers were seen harnessing themselves to sledges to rescue their sick and wounded comrades from this fatal bank. Farther on, apart from the crowd, were some soldiers standing calm and immoveable. They were watching over their dying officers, who had committed themselves to their care, and now conjured them in vain to think only of their own safety ; they steadily refused, and rather than abandon their commanders they tranquilly waited for death or slavery.

Above the first passage, just as the young Lauriston had thrown himself into the river that he might execute his sovereign's orders with greater despatch, a frail boat, laden with a mother and her two children, overset among the ice-flakes ; an artillery-man who was struggling among the rest to pass over the bridge saw the accident ; instantly, forgetting himself, he threw himself into the river and after great exertions succeeded in saving one of the three sufferers. It was the younger of the two children ; the unfortunate boy called on his mother with cries of despair, and the brave cannonier was heard telling him as he carried him off in his arms, " Not to cry ; that, after saving him from the water, he would not abandon him upon

land; that he would not let him want, and that he would be his father."

The night of the 28th increased all their miseries. The darkness did not rob the Russian cannon of their victims. The course of the river, the black mass of men, horses and carriages, on the universal blank of snow, the noise which arose from the crowd, all enabled the enemy's artillery-men to direct their fire.

About nine o'clock in the evening, there was a still farther aggravation of the distress and horror, when Victor commenced his retreat, and his divisions faced about, and opened a horrible breach in the mass of wretched beings whom they had hitherto defended. Nevertheless a rear-guard having been left at Studzianka, the multitude, stupified by the cold, or determined not to leave their baggage, refused to take advantage of this last night to cross to the opposite bank. In vain were the carriages set on fire, as the last means of tearing from them their unfortunate possessors. It was not until day, and when it was too late, that they could be brought back to the entrance of the bridge which they then besieged anew. It was half-past eight in the morning when Eblé, seeing the Russians approaching, found it necessary instantly to set it on fire.

The calamity had arrived at its height. A great number of carriages, three waggons, several thousand men, and some few women and children were left on the enemy's bank. They were seen wandering in desolate troops by the river side. Some threw themselves in to swim, others ventured on the pieces of ice which floated in the stream, there were even some who darted headlong into the flames of the bridge, which crumbled under their feet—burnt and frozen, at the same moment, they perished under opposite tor-

ments. The dead bodies of all those who had made these desperate attempts were soon seen in floating heaps driven by the ice-flakes against the piers; the remainder awaited the coming up of the Russians. Wittgenstein did not appear on the heights till an hour after the departure of Eblé, and although he had earned none of the honours he reaped all the advantages of victory.

## CHAPTER X.

WHILST this catastrophe was fulfilled, the remains of the main army on the other bank, formed only a shapeless irregular mass, which rolled confusedly off towards Zembin. The whole of the surrounding country is a wooded plain of great extent, on which the waters creeping along with no decided current amid the various inclinations of the surface formed a vast morass. The army traversed this dreary tract by means of three successive bridges, each three hundred toises in length, with an amazement blended with both fear and joy.

The beginning of these magnificent bridges, built of resinous pine, was only a few wersts distant from our passage over the river. Tschaplitz had occupied them for several days. Some felled trees and heaps of faggots of a dry and combustible kind of wood were lying at the entrance to them, as if to suggest to him what he ought to do. A spark from the pipe of one of his Cossacks would almost have been sufficient. From that moment all our exertions, all our sufferings in crossing the Berezina, would have been rendered fruitless. Entrapped between these marshes and the river,

pent up in a narrow space, without provisions, without shelter, exposed to an insupportable hurricane, the army and its emperor would have been compelled to yield without a contest.

In this desperate situation, in which the whole power of France seemed to be at the mercy of Russia, in which every circumstance was hostile to us, and favourable to our adversaries, they did every thing by halves. Kutusof did not reach Kopis on the Dnieper till the day on which Napoleon arrived on the Berezhina. Wittgenstein suffered himself to be kept in check just as long as was necessary for our safety, Tchitchakof was beaten, and thus, out of eighty thousand men, Napoleon succeeded in saving sixty thousand.

He had stayed up to the last moment on these dismal banks, near the ruins of Brilowa, without shelter, and at the head of his guard, a third part of whom had been destroyed by the storm. During the day they remained under arms and in order of battle; at night they bivouacked in square around their chief, and these old grenadiers were incessantly occupied in making up their fires. They were seen sitting on their knapsacks, with their elbows on their knees, and their heads on their hands, dosing, thus doubled together that their limbs might impart some warmth to each other, and that they might be less tormented by the gnawing emptiness of their stomach.

During these three days and three nights, Napoleon, whose eye and whose thoughts seemed to wander from the midst of the faithful band in three directions at once, supported the second corps by his presence and by his orders, defended the ninth and the passage across the river by his artillery, and united his exertions to those of Eblé in saving as much as possible



from the general wreck. Lastly, he directed the march of the remnant of his army, in person, towards Zembin, whither prince Eugene had preceded him. It was observed that he ordered his marshals who had now lost all their men to take up positions on the road, just as if they still had armies under their command. One of them made some bitter observations to him upon this subject, and began a detail of his losses, when, Napoleon, who was determined to reject all reports lest they should degenerate into complaints, interrupted him hastily with these words, "Why do you try to rob me of my serenity?" And when the marshal persevered, he stopped his mouth, repeating in a tone of reproach, "I beg to know, Sir, why you try to rob me of my serenity?" An expression which showed the sort of deportment he wished to assume in his adversity, and that which he required from others.

During these fatal days, every bivouac around him was marked by its circle of dead. There were assembled men of all nations, ranks, and ages; ministers, generals, commissaries. One most remarkable figure in the group was an old nobleman, a relic of the gay and brilliant days of the French court. As soon as day broke, this general officer of sixty was seen sitting on the snow-covered trunk of a tree, employed with unalterable gaiety upon the details of his toilet. In the midst of the hurricane he dressed and powdered his head with the greatest care, as if in mockery of the miseries and the adverse elements which assailed him.

Near him were the scientific men of the army, who even here were holding their discussions. The discoveries which have been made in our times lead to the investigation of every phenomenon of nature. Amid the intense sufferings which these men endured from

the north wind, they were engaged in inquiries into the causes of its uniform direction. Their hypothesis was, that the sun, from the time of its departure towards the antarctic pole, by warming the southern hemisphere, renders all its exhalations so rare that they rise and leave a vacuum on the surface of that zone into which the vapours of our zone, which are lower because less rarified, rush in continual succession. That the Arctic regions, loaded with the vapours they have given out during the preceding spring, eagerly discharge them in the same direction, in which they sweep in an impetuous and icy current over the Russian territories, stiffening and destroying all in its course. Others among them remarked with curiosity and attention the regular hexagonal crystallization of every one of the particles of snow which covered their garments. The phenomenon of the parhelions or the simultaneous appearance of several images of the sun, which were reflected by the icicles suspended in the air, formed another subject of observation, and frequently diverted their attention from their personal sufferings.

## CHAPTER XI.

ON the 29th the emperor left the banks of the Berezina, driving before him the crowd of disbanded men, and marching with the ninth corps which was already falling into a state of disorganization. On the eve of this day, the second and ninth corps, and Dom-browski's division, formed a total of fourteen thousand men ; yet even in this short time, with the exception of

about six thousand men, they retained no appearance of division, brigade, or regiment.

Night, hunger, cold, the fall of a number of officers, the loss of the baggage-waggons which were left on the other side of the river, the example of so many deserters, the much more disheartening spectacle of the wounded, abandoned on either bank, who were rolling in agony and despair over the blood-stained snow,—every thing in short had contributed to disorganize them, and they were lost and confounded in the mass of disbanded men, who continually arrived from Moscow.

There were still sixty thousand men, but without any connexion or regularity. All marched pell-mell, cavalry, infantry, and artillery-men, French and Germans: there was neither wing nor centre. The artillery and the carriages rolled through this confused crowd with no other order or plan than that of getting on as quickly as possible. Upon this causeway, which in some places was narrow, and in others hilly, they crushed each other in the defiles that they might scatter themselves over the country wherever they could hope to find shelter or food. In this way Napoleon arrived at Kamen, where he slept, together with the prisoners taken the preceding day, who were folded like cattle. These wretched men, after having been reduced to devour their dead, almost all perished from cold and hunger.

On the 30th, he reached Pleszczenitz. The duke of Reggio, who was wounded, had retired thither the day before, with about forty officers and privates. He thought himself safe there, when the Russian officer Landskoi with five hundred hussars, four hundred Cossacks and two cannon, made his way into the place and filled all the streets.

Oudinot's feeble escort was dispersed. He found himself reduced to defend himself with seventeen men in a wooden house; but this he effected with such extraordinary courage and success that the enemy, surprised and alarmed, retreated out of the town, and posted himself on a height whence he only attacked him with his cannon. The brave marshal's destiny however still pursued him, for he was wounded again in this skirmish by a splinter of wood.

Two Westphalian battalions, which preceded the emperor, at length came to his relief, though late, and not until they and the escort of the duke of Reggio, who did not at first recognise each other, had mutually undergone a long and anxious scrutiny.

On the 3rd of December, Napoleon arrived at Malodeczno in the morning. This was the last point at which Tchitchakof might have intercepted him. Some provisions were found at this place, forage was abundant, the day fine, the sun brilliant, and we felt the cold supportable. And, at length, after having been for a long time without any courier, they all met us here at once. The Poles were immediately ordered upon Warsaw by way of Olita, and the dismounted cavalry on the Niemen by way of Merez. The remainder were to follow the high road, which they had just fallen into.

Up to this moment Napoleon had never seemed to conceive the idea of quitting his army. But about the middle of this day he suddenly announced to Daru and Duroc a determination of immediately setting out for Paris.

Daru could not see any necessity for this measure. He objected "that the communications were now reopened, and the greatest dangers past. That at

every step of his retreat he would now meet reinforcements from Germany and Paris." But the emperor replied, "that he did not feel himself strong enough to leave Prussia between himself and France. Why should he remain at the head of a rout? Murat and Eugene were quite sufficient to lead, and Ney to cover it. It was indispensable for him to return to France to quiet all apprehensions there, to raise new troops, and keep all his German subjects to their allegiance; in short, to return to the assistance of what remained of his grand army with fresh and sufficient forces. But in order to accomplish this, he must traverse four hundred leagues of allied territory alone; and, to do so without danger, it was absolutely necessary that his resolution should be unexpected, his route unknown, and the report of the disasters which had attended his retreat still uncertain; he must be beforehand with the news, and the effect it might produce, and also the defections it might occasion. He had therefore no time to lose. The moment of his departure was come."

His only doubt was as to the leader whom he should leave for the army. He hesitated between Murat and Eugene. He loved the prudence and the devotedness of the latter. But Murat had more eclat, and it was an imposing character that he wanted. Eugene should therefore remain with Murat; his age and his inferiority of rank would secure obedience, and his character would secure his zeal. He would be an example of both to the other marshals. Berthier, the habitual channel of all the emperor's orders and favours, was to remain with them; nothing therefore would be changed either in form or organization; this arrangement, moreover, so plainly showed

his design to return immediately, that it would control the most impatient of his own people, and intimidate his warmest enemies.

Such were Napoleon's motives. Caulaincourt immediately received orders to make secret preparations for his departure. The place indicated to him was Smorgony; the time, the night of the 5th of December.

Although Daru was not to accompany Napoleon, but was left with the heavy charge of the administration of the army, he listened in silence, as he felt that he had nothing to object to such powerful reasons; but with Berthier the case was different. He was old and enfeebled, and had not left Napoleon for sixteen years, and he could not bear the thought of the separation.

The scene which took place in private, in consequence of this, was very violent. The emperor was indignant at his resistance. In his anger he reproached him with the benefits he had lavished upon him. "The army," he said, "stood in need of the reputation he had conferred upon him, and which was only a reflection of his own. At all events, he would give him twenty-four hours to decide, after which, if he still persisted, he might set off for his estate in France, where he should remain banished for ever from Paris and the emperor's presence." The next day, the 4th of December, Berthier submitted with much melancholy, after apologizing for his refusal on the score of his age and his shattered health.

## CHAPTER XII.

At the very instant, however, when Napoleon had decided on his departure, the winter became more terrific than ever, as if the skies of Russia were conscious that their prey was about to escape them, and redoubled their rigours to overwhelm him and destroy us.

It was through an atmosphere twenty-six degrees below freezing-point, that we reached Bienitz on the 4th of December.

The emperor had left the count de Lobau and several hundred of his old guard at Malodeczno, at which point the Zembin road joined the high road from Minsk to Wilna. It was necessary to guard this division of the roads till the arrival of Victor, who was to defend it afterwards till Ney came up ; for the rear-guard was still intrusted to that marshal, and to the 2nd corps commanded by Maisons.

On the evening of the 29th of November, the day on which Napoleon left the banks of the Berezina, Ney and the 2nd and 3rd corps, now reduced to three thousand soldiers, passed the long bridges leading to Zembin, after leaving, at their entrance, Maisons and a few hundred men to defend and burn them.

Tchitchakof's attack was late, but vigorous, and not only with musketry, but with the bayonet : he was repulsed. At the same time, Maisons had the long bridges filled with the faggots, which Tchaplitz, a few days previous, had neglected to use. As soon as all was ready, the enemy heartily tired of the engagement, the night advanced, and the bivouacs completely posted, he rapidly passed the defile, and set the bridges

on fire. In a few moments, these long causeways fell into ashes over the marshes, which the frost had not rendered passable.

These swamps stopped the enemy, and compelled him to change his route. The next day, consequently, Ney and Maisons pursued their march without molestation. But on the day after, the 1st of December, just as they came in sight of Pleszczenitzzy, they suddenly perceived the whole of the enemy's cavalry coming towards them at full speed, and driving before them on their right Doumerc and his cuirassiers. In one instant they were attacked on every side.

At the same time, Maisons saw the village through which he was to retire completely filled with stragglers. He sent to tell them to fly immediately; but the poor famished wretches, neither hearing nor seeing any thing, would not quit their meals, and Maisons was soon driven into Pleszczenitzzy upon them. But at the mere sight of the enemy, and the noise of the shells, they were all in motion at once; and precipitated themselves in crowds on all sides in the great road.

Maisons and his troop found themselves suddenly lost in the midst of the terrified crowd which pressed upon them;—stifled and entirely deprived of the use of their arms, the general had no other resource than to order his men to stand close and immoveable, and to wait till the torrent had rolled off. The enemy's cavalry now came up with this mass and plunged into it: they made their way into it very slowly, and only by cutting down all before them.

At length, the crowd dispersing, discovered to the Russians Maisons and his troop waiting for them in a firm and determined posture; but the crowd had drawn a part of our soldiers into their own tumultuous



flight. Maisons now lost all hope. He was on a bare plain, with seven or eight hundred men opposed to thousands of the enemy; he determined, therefore, to gain a neighbouring wood, where he might sell his life more dearly, when he beheld eighteen hundred Poles coming towards him from this very wood, perfectly fresh troops, which Ney had met and brought to his assistance. This reinforcement checked the enemy, and secured the retreat as far as Malodeczno.

On the 4th of December, at about four o'clock in the afternoon, Ney and Maisons came in sight of this town, whence Napoleon had set out the same morning. They were closely followed by Tchaplitz; Ney had only six hundred men left. The weakness of this rear-guard, the approach of night, and the sight of a place of shelter, excited the ardour of the Russian general. His attack was vigorous. Ney and Maisons being convinced that they must die of cold on the high-road if they suffered themselves to be driven beyond this cantonment chose rather to perish in defending it. They halted at the entrance of the town, and as their artillery-horses were dying, they gave up all thought of saving their cannon, and resolved to use them for the last time for the destruction of the enemy; they therefore formed a battery of all their remaining guns, and commenced a terrible fire. Tchaplitz's column of attack was completely broken by it, and halted. That general, however, taking advantage of his superior numbers, turned a part of his forces towards another entrance to the town, and his foremost troops were already within the outskirts of Malodeczno, when they suddenly encountered a fresh enemy. It fortunately happened, that Victor, with about four thousand men, the remains of the 9th corps, still occupied this village. The contest was furious;

the houses at the end of the town were repeatedly taken and retaken. Both sides fought less for glory than to secure to themselves, or to seize from their antagonist, a refuge against the deadly cold. It was not till eleven o'clock at night, that the Russians abandoned the attempt, and went off half-frozen, to seek another asylum in the neighbouring villages.

On the next day, the 5th of December, Ney and Maisons thought that the duke of Belluno would take their place as rear-guard; they soon, however, perceived that this marshal had retired according to his instructions, and that they were left alone in Malodeczno with sixty men; all the rest had fled. Their soldiers whom, to the last moment, the Russians had been unable to subdue, were conquered by the intolerable severity of the climate; their arms fell from their hands, and they themselves dropped lifeless a few paces farther on.

Maisons, in whom great strength of mind was united to a proportionate strength of body, was not dismayed: he continued his retreat as far as Bienitza. He was obliged to stop every minute to rally the men who were perpetually escaping from him, but he still marked his rear-guard by a few bayonets.

This was all that was necessary; for the Russians, who were themselves frozen and obliged to disperse before nightfall through the neighbouring dwellings, dared not quit them before broad daylight. They then began to follow us again, but without making any attack, for the violence of the cold rendered it impossible to halt for any regular movements either of attack or defence.

Meanwhile, Ney, surprised at the departure of Victor, had rejoined him: he endeavoured by every means in his power to stop him, but the duke of Belluno

refused, on the plea that he had been ordered to retire. Ney then asked him to give him his troops, and offered to take the command in his stead, but Victor would neither give up his men nor take the rear guard without orders. It was reported that the prince of the Mosqua betrayed the greatest violence in this altercation, which made no impression on the inflexible coldness of Victor. At length, an order from the emperor arrived. Victor was charged to support the retreat, and Ney ordered to Smorgony.

### CHAPTER XIII.

NAPOLEON had just reached that place, surrounded by a group of dying men. His heart was corroded by grief, but he betrayed no emotion at the sufferings of these unfortunate beings, who on their side did not reproach him by a murmur.

Sedition was, indeed, impossible; it would have cost a fresh effort, and the whole strength of every man was requisite to maintain the conflict with hunger, cold, and fatigue. For such a purpose also, combination, agreement, mutual understanding would have been necessary; but famine, and all the scourges by which we were afflicted, detached every man from his neighbour, isolated him, and centred him utterly within himself. We did not exhaust ourselves in provocations—not even complaints—we marched silently, husbanding all our resources against the hostile climate; diverted from every reflection by incessant action and incessant suffering. Physical wants absorbed all the moral strength; we had a mechani-

cal existence—an existence of mere sensation, and remained in a state of subordination from recollections, associations, habits, formed in better times ; and still more, from that sense of honour, that love of glory, exalted by twenty years of victory, whose warmth still lived and struggled in our hearts.

The authority of our leaders continued to be respected too, because it had always been completely paternal ; all our dangers, our triumphs, our sufferings, our joys, had been in common. We were an unhappy family, and perhaps the most pitiable member of it was the head. Thus did the emperor and his army preserve towards each other a noble and solemn silence ; both were at once too proud for complaint, and too experienced not to know its utter uselessness.

Napoleon now precipitately entered his last imperial quarters ; he completed his last instructions and revised the twenty-ninth and last bulletin of his expiring army. Precautions were taken in his inner apartment, that, until the morrow, nothing of what was about to pass might transpire.

Yet the presentiment of some final misfortune seized the minds of some of his officers ; all wanted to follow him. They longed with inexpressible desire to see France again, to be once more in the bosoms of their families, and to fly from this atrocious climate ; yet not one dared to betray his wishes ; duty and honour kept them silent.

Whilst they feigned a tranquillity which they were far from enjoying, the night arrived, and with it the moment the emperor had fixed for declaring his resolution to the leaders of his army. All the marshals were summoned. As they entered one by one, he took them apart, and in the first place gained them

over individually to his project, sometimes by arguments, sometimes by an air of unrestrained confidence.

Thus, for instance, as soon as he descried Davoust, he advanced to meet him, and asked him, "Why he never saw him? Whether he had deserted him?" And on Davoust replying that he thought he had displeased him, the emperor mildly explained himself, listened attentively to his answers, and confided to him even the secret of the very road he thought it best to take, and took his advice on all the details.

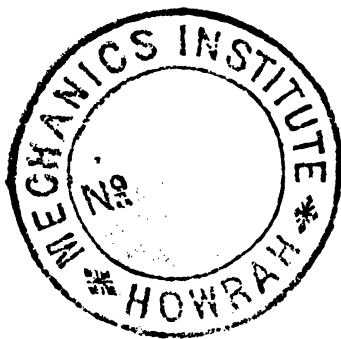
His manner was engaging and affectionate to all; then, having seated them all at his table, he praised them for their noble deeds during this campaign. To his own rashness he only alluded in the following words: "Had I been born on the throne, had I been a Bourbon, it would have been easy for me to avoid committing faults."

When the repast was finished, he desired prince Eugene to read them his twenty-ninth bulletin; after which, declaring aloud what he had told each individual in private, he said, "that this very night, he was going to set out with Duroc, Caulaincourt, and Lobau for Paris. That his presence there was indispensable for France, as well as for the remnant of his unfortunate army. Thence only could he control the Austrians and the Prussians. Those nations would doubtless hesitate to declare war upon him, when they knew him to be at the head of the French nation, and of a fresh army of twelve hundred thousand men."

He added, "that he had sent Ney before to Wilna, to reorganise every thing in that place—that he would be seconded by Rapp, who would then proceed to Dantzic, Lauriston to Warsaw, and Narbonne to Berlin; that his household would remain with the army,

but that the decisive blow must be struck at Wilna. The enemy must be stopped there. There they would find Loison, and de Wrede, reinforcements, provisions, and ammunition of every kind, and that they would afterwards take up their winter-quarters behind the Niemen, and that he hoped the Russians would not pass the Vistula before his return. I leave," added he lastly, "the command of the army to the king of Naples. I hope you will obey him as myself, and that the most perfect concord will reign among you."

It was then ten o'clock at night; he arose, and pressing their hands affectionately, embraced them all, and set out.



## BOOK XII.

## CHAPTER I.

I CONFESS, my dear comrades, that my mind, dejected and nearly overwhelmed, was reluctant to plunge deeper into the recollection of such dreadful horrors. I had arrived at the crisis of Napoleon's departure, and was willing to persuade myself that, at length, my painful task was finished. I had announced myself as the historian of that memorable period in which, from the pinnacle of glory, we were precipitated into the deepest abyss of misfortune; but, having at length nothing to retrace but the most frightful calamities, it seemed that you might well be spared the pain of reading such afflicting recitals, and myself the distressing efforts of a recollection obliged to sift among still burning ashes, to enumerate nothing but disasters, to record only upon tombs.

At last, however, since it was our destiny to carry misfortune as well as success to an extraordinary and improbable length, I have determined to keep my engagement with you even to the very letter of it. As the history of eminent individuals necessarily leads to and includes their last sad moments, so I feel that I have no right to keep silence with respect to the last sighs of the expiring grand army. Every thing relating to it is connected with renown, its latest groan

as well as its shouts of victory. Every thing about it was great : our career will be the astonishment of future ages, at once from its splendour and from its misfortune ! Melancholy as the consolation is, it is the only one we have remaining, and be assured, my friends, that a fall so great as ours will resound through that futurity where great calamities as well as great glories will obtain the meed of immortality.

Napoleon had just passed through the crowd of his officers who were ranged on each side of his passage, bestowing on them melancholy and forced smiles instead of verbal adieus, and carrying with him their best wishes, which were equally mute and indicated only by respectful and expressive gestures. Himself and Caulaincourt were shut up in a carriage, of which his Mameluke and Wukasowitch, the captain of his guard, occupied the box. Duroc and Lobau followed in a sledge.

He was at first escorted by some Poles, and afterwards by the Neapolitans of the royal guard. This corps, when it went from Wilna to meet the emperor, amounted to between six and seven hundred men. It almost wholly perished in that short space ; winter was the only enemy it had encountered. On this very night the Russians surprised, and almost instantly abandoned Joupranoui, or as others state Osmiana, a town through which the escort had to pass ; and Napoleon was within a single hour of being involved in the conflict.

He found the duke of Bassano at Miedniki. His first words were " that he no longer had an army ; that he had been marching for some days in the midst of an assemblage of unarmed men, wandering about in search of mere subsistence ; that they might, however, still be rallied by giving them bread, shoes,



clothing, and arms, but that his military administration had foreseen nothing, and that his orders had not been executed." And when Maret replied by delivering to him a return of the vast stores collected at Wilna, he exclaimed "that it gave him new life! That he charged him to communicate to Murat and Berthier his orders that they should stop for eight days in that capital to rally the army, and give it heart and strength sufficient to enable it to continue its retreat less miserably."

The rest of Napoleon's journey was accomplished without any impediment. He turned Wilna by its suburbs; passed through Wilkowiski, where he exchanged his carriage for a sledge; halted on the 10th at Warsaw, to request of the Poles a levy of twelve thousand Cossacks, to grant them a few subsidies, and to promise his speedy return among them at the head of three hundred thousand men. Hence, after rapidly passing through Silesia, he revisited Dresden and its monarch, then Hanau, Mayence, and at last Paris, where he suddenly made his appearance on the 19th of December, two days after the publication of his twenty-ninth bulletin.

From Malo-Iaroslavetz to Smorgony, this sovereign of Europe had been merely the commander of a dying and disorganized army. From Smorgony to the Rhine, he was an unknown fugitive through a hostile territory; beyond the Rhine he found himself again the master and the conqueror of Europe; his sail was once more filled by a favouring gale.

In the mean time, at Smorgony, his generals approved of his departure; and far from being dejected by it derived from it all their hope. The army had now nothing more to do than to continue its flight; the road was open for it; and the Russian frontier only at a little distance. They were near a reinforcement

of eighteen thousand men, a great city, and an immense magazine. Murat and Berthier, left to themselves, had no doubt of their competence to regulate this flight. But in the midst of extreme disorder a colossus had been required as a point for rallying, and that colossus had disappeared. In the vast void thus left Murat was scarcely to be perceived.

It was then most clearly observable that a great man can have no substitute ; whether from the circumstance of his dependents being too proud to yield obedience to another, or from the fact that, having always taken the whole thought, and charge, and responsibility upon himself, he had in reality only trained up good instruments, able lieutenants, not chiefs truly deserving of that name.

On the very first night one general refused obedience. The marshal who commanded the rear-guard returned almost alone to the royal quarters. Three thousand men of the old and new guard were still to be found there. This was the whole of the grand army. Of that gigantic body this head alone was now remaining. But, at the news of Napoleon's departure, spoilt by the habit of being commanded only by the conqueror of Europe, no longer supported in their superiority of discipline by the honour of serving him, and disdaining to become the guard of any other, these veterans themselves gave way in their turn, and fell into insubordination and disorder.

The greater part of the colonels of the army who had been thus far objects of high admiration for marching on with four or five officers and soldiers around their eagle, and still maintaining their place of battle, now no longer received orders but from themselves. Each considered himself as distinctly charged with his own safety, and seemed resolved to trust no other for

accomplishing it. There were some who advanced two hundred leagues without once looking behind them. In short the cry, or at least the principle of *sauve-qui-peut* was almost universal.

The disappearance of the emperor and the incompetence of Murat were not, however, the only causes of this dispersion: the principal one was the rigour of the season, which now had become extreme. It aggravated every difficulty, and seemed to interpose an impassable barrier between Wilna and the army.

As far as Malodeczno, and up to the 4th of December, the day on which it came heavily upon us, the route, although difficult, had been marked with a smaller number of dead than before passing the Berezina. This relief was owing to the vigour of Ney and de Maisons, who kept the enemy in check, to the temperature of the air which was then more supportable, to a few resources still offered by a country not completely ravaged, and finally to the circumstance that the men who had survived the passage of the Berezina were those only who had possessed the most robust and steely constitutions.

The species of organization which had been introduced into disorder was still kept up. The mass of fugitives travelled on divided into a multitude of small associations of eight or ten men each. Many of these bands still possessed one horse loaded with their provisions, or which might in extreme emergency serve for food himself. Some rags, a few utensils, a wallet, and a staff, constituted the accoutrements and armour of these unfortunate men. They had neither the arms nor the uniform of the soldier, nor the inclination to contend with any other enemies than cold and hunger; but they had remaining, perseverance, firmness, the habitude of danger and endurance, and a mind ever

prompt, supple, and vigilant always to make the most and best of their circumstances. Among the soldiers who were still effective, a nickname which they had themselves applied in derision to those of their companions who had fallen into disorder had no small influence in deterring them from it.

. But from Malodeczno, and subsequently to the departure of Napoleon, when winter attacked each individual among us with redoubled force, all these associations against misery were broken up: there was a mere multitude of solitary and single-handed struggles. Even the best no longer respected themselves or others; nothing checked them; no appealing looks had any effect upon them; calamity was without hope of succour, and even of regret; pusillanimity had no longer censurers, and scarcely witnesses; all were victims.

From this time, there no longer existed among them any fraternity in arms, any endearment of society, any tie of cordiality or almost of acquaintanceship; excess of misery seemed to have brutified them. Hunger, craving and maddening hunger, had reduced them to the brutal instinct of self-preservation, to the sole operating principle of the most ferocious animals, ready to sacrifice every thing to itself. A barbarous and cruel nature appeared to have superseded all their former feelings. Like savages, the strongest plundered the weakest: they hastened with rapacious eagerness towards the dying, and sometimes began the work of plunder without waiting for the signal of their last sighs. When a horse fell, you might have conceived yourself to have seen a pack of famished hounds rushing on the carcase. They instantly surrounded and tore it in pieces, fighting for them with each other like voracious dogs.

However, the greater number retained sufficient moral restraint to seek their own preservation without attacking or impairing that of others; but this was the highest reach and evidence of their virtue. If any, whether chiefs or privates, fell at their side, or under the wheels of the cannon, it was wholly in vain that they cried out for assistance, and appealed to one common country, religion, and cause. They could not obtain even a look of kindness and compassion. All the cold inflexibility of the climate had made its way into their hearts; its rigour had contracted their feelings as well as their countenances. All, with the exception of a few chiefs, were absorbed by their own sufferings; and terror left no room for pity.

Thus the egotism which is often justly imputed to the excess of prosperity, in the present instance arose from the excess of misfortune, and was certainly far more excusable. The one is voluntary, the other was compulsory; one a vice of the heart, the other an impulse of instinct, and entirely physical. And in reality to stop even for a few moments would have been often fatal. In this universal shipwreck, to stretch out the hand to a fallen companion, to a dying chief, was an act of noble generosity. The least movement of humanity became an act of sublime benevolence.

In the mean time some kept their strength, and acted their parts well in opposition to both earth and skies; they protected and assisted those who were weakest. The number of such, however, was small indeed.

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## CHAPTER II.

ON the 6th of December, the very day immediately following the departure of Napoleon, the severity of the season became dreadfully increased. The air was filled with small particles of ice ; and the birds fell to the earth lifeless and frozen. The atmosphere was mute and motionless ; it seemed as if every thing into which nature had breathed the breath of life, as if even the wind itself had been struck, fettered, congealed, by one universal death. No words, no murmurs were then to be heard. All proceeded onward in mournful silence, the silence of despair, and in tears which plainly indicated it.

In this empire of death we hastened forward like so many unfortunate shades. The heavy and monotonous sound of our steps, the crashing of the trampled snow, and the feeble groans of the dying alone interrupted this impressive and awful stillness. No longer was to be heard any expression of execration or anger ; any thing which implied the heat of passion, or any strength of animation ; scarcely even the power of ejaculating a brief petition to heaven was now remaining. The greater number of those who fell did not utter a single murmur of complaint, whether from weakness or from resignation, or, perhaps, because men complain only as long as they feel hope and think it possible to excite pity.

Those of our soldiers who had hitherto been most active, firm, and persevering, were now severely disheartened and daunted. Sometimes the snow opened under their feet ; more frequently, its hardened and glassy surface affording them no point of support, they slipped at almost every step, and their march was

rather a succession of stumblings. It seemed as if the hostile soil refused to bear them, as if it escaped from their efforts to avail themselves of it, and laid snares to embarrass them, in order to impede their progress, and deliver them up a prey to the pursuing Russians, or to the horrors of their climate.

And in reality, when from exhaustion they halted for a moment, winter with his icy and heavy hand made many of them his victims. In vain was it, that the unfortunate men, on feeling themselves benumbed, rose up, and, already in a state of speechlessness and nearly of insensibility, moved on for a few paces mechanically like automatons: their blood freezing in their veins, like a stream in its channel, struck chillness on the heart, and, the vital fluid being thus impeded in its course, they reeled and staggered as in a state of drunkenness. Their eyes, reddened and inflamed by constantly looking on the dazzling snow, by the deprivation of rest, and the smoke of their bivouacs, shed literally tears of blood; the deepest sighs heaved from their bosoms; they gazed on the sky, on their comrades, and on the ground, with an eye of consternation fixed and haggard; it was their last, their mute farewell; or, possibly, their designed reproach of that bitter nature which had thus cruelly tormented them. They soon fell upon their knees, and almost immediately upon their hands: their heads still vibrated for a few instants from side to side, and their gasping mouths uttered some disjointed and agonizing sounds; at length, their heads fell also on the snow, staining it with their dark and livid blood, and their scene of suffering was over!

Their companions passed them without moving out of their way a single step, through fear of only even so far lengthening their journey; without even turn-

ing their heads towards the spot, for their beard and hair were stuck over with heavy icicles, and every motion was attended with pain. They did not even utter any lamentation for them. For, in reality, what had they lost by death? What had they left behind them? So frightful, in fact, were the sufferings of the survivors, so far were they still from France, so utterly detached from it by the hideous aspect of every thing around them, and by actual and overwhelming calamity, that all the delightful associations of memory were broken up, and hope itself nearly destroyed. Accordingly, the greater number had become indifferent about death, from the apparent inevitableness of their speedily incurring it, from their constant familiarity with it, from a sort of fashion which led them sometimes to talk of it in a tone even of derision and insult: the most prevalent feeling, however, on the view of their departed comrades stretched out and stiffened, when they passed before them, was that arising from the thought that they were then at rest! that their fatigues, their wants, their sufferings were over! And indeed whatever death may be in prosperous, stable, and uniform circumstances, however it may then be regarded as an event of painful surprise, a frightful contrast, an awful and terrible revolution; in such a tumultuous state of things as that before us, in the violent and incessant whirl of a life made up only of unremitted toil, and danger, and pain, it appeared nothing more than an easy transition, a not unfavourable change, only one dislodgment more in addition to all the other scenes of disorder and subversion, and little calculated to excite surprise or apprehension.

Such were the last days of the grand army. Its last nights were more dreadful still. Those who were



overtaken in a body by them at a distance from any habitation halted on the border of a wood. There they kindled fires, in front of which they remained the whole night, upright and motionless like spectres. They were unable to obtain a sufficiency of this heat, and approached so near that their clothes were absolutely burnt, and sometimes also the frozen parts of their bodies, which the fire decomposed. Then an irresistible attack of pain compelled them to stretch themselves at their length on the ground, and in the morning they attempted in vain to rise.

In the mean time, those whom the cold had left almost uninjured, and who had preserved some remains of energy, set about preparing their melancholy meal. This consisted, as at Smolensk, of some slices of horse-flesh broiled, and of barley-meal made into *bouillie* with some water, or kneaded into cakes, which, for want of salt, they seasoned with their gunpowder.

During the whole night, new phantoms were constantly approaching guided by the light of the fires; but, after hastening as fast as they were able to obtain the desired heat, were driven away by those who had first arrived. These miserable creatures wandered from one bivouac to another, till, at length, overpowered by cold and despair, they abandoned all farther effort, and lying down on the snow behind the circle of their more fortunate comrades, in a short time expired. Some, without tools or strength to cut down the lofty pines of the forest, vainly attempted to set fire to their trunks as they stood; but death soon came upon them while making these endeavours, and surprised them in a variety of attitudes.

But even greater horrors still were exhibited in the vast pent-houses or sheds which lined some parts of

the road. Soldiers and officers all rushed promiscuously into these, and almost threw themselves upon each other in heaps. There, like cattle, they closely wedged against one another around their fires; and the living, not being able to remove the dead from the hearth, placed themselves upon them to expire in their turn, and serve as a death-bed to succeeding victims. Soon other parties of stragglers presented themselves; and, not being able to penetrate into these asylums of misery, they besieged them.

It frequently happened that they pulled down the walls of these buildings, which consisted of dry wood to keep up their fires; at other times, when repulsed from them, they were content to use them as shelters for their bivouacs, the flames of which soon communicated to the buildings, and the soldiers with which they were crowded, already half dead with cold, were completely destroyed by fire. Those who were preserved by the shelter which these buildings afforded them, on the following day found their companions frozen and heaped together around their extinguished fires. In order to quit these catacombs, it became necessary for them to climb over the dreadful mass of those who lay really or apparently dead, for some still breathed who retained no strength to rise.

At Joÿpranoui, the town in which the emperor experienced the narrow escape of being within an hour of becoming a prisoner to the Russian partisan Seslawin, some soldiers burnt a number of houses entirely to the ground merely to get warmth for a few moments. The light of these fires attracted around them a number of miserable creatures whom the intensity of cold and pain had driven to delirium; they rushed forward to them like savages or furies, and with

gnashing teeth and infernal smiles threw themselves into these flaming furnaces, and perished in the midst of them in horrible convulsions. Their famished companions looked on without terror, and there were some who even drew out the mutilated and half-broiled bodies, and ventured to allay their hunger with this revolting food!

This was the army which had proceeded from the most civilized nation in Europe, an army recently so brilliant, victorious over men to the last moment of its existence, and the name of which still governed so many conquered capitals. Its most robust and powerful warriors, who had with proud complacency traversed so many fields of victory, had now lost their formidable aspect. Covered only with rags, their feet bare and bleeding, leaning on branches of pine-trees, they were now dragging themselves to the best of their ability still onward; and all that energy and perseverance which they had before exercised to ensure conquest they now employed to make good their flight.

At that period, following too naturally the example of superstitious nations, we also had our presages, and heard of the verification of numerous predictions. Some asserted that a comet had shed its ominous light on our passage of the Berezina. They added, indeed, "that undoubtedly those bodies did not presage the important events that would occur on our world, but that they might very possibly contribute to modify them; at least this would be admitted by all who allowed their material influence on this earthly globe, and all the consequences which such physical influence might produce upon human minds which were unquestionably dependent on the matter which they animated."

Some there were who cited certain ancient prophecies: these, it was said, had announced for this very period an invasion of the Tartars as far as the banks of the Seine. And it was evident that they might now make their way over the defeated and prostrate army of France, and accomplish the prediction.

Others recurred to the fierce and murderous storm which had marked our entrance upon the Russian territory. "Heaven had uttered its voice in that storm. This was the evil it had predicted to our progress! Nature had interposed and made an effort to prevent this dreadful catastrophe! How could it have happened that we were so obstinately infatuated and incredulous as not to comprehend the indication!" Thus did the simultaneous fall of four hundred thousand men, an event which was in fact no more extraordinary than the successive plagues and revolutions which are seen incessantly ravaging the world, appear to them an event singular and unique, and such as must naturally and necessarily call into action all the powers of heaven and earth! Thus, in short, does the human mind refer every thing to itself; as if providence, kindly sustaining our weakness, and apprehensive lest it should feel lost and annihilated in the prospect of infinitude, had intended that each individual, a mere point in space, should believe himself to be the centre of immensity.

### CHAPTER III.

THE army was in this last stage of physical and moral disorder, when its foremost fugitives reached Wilna. Wilna! their magazine, their depôt, the first opulent

and inhabited city which they had met with since their entrance into Russia. Its mere name and its proximity still sustained the courage of many.

On the 9th of December the greater number of these unfortunate men at length came within sight of this desired capital. Immediately, some dragging themselves, and others rushing forward, all were ingulphed headlong in its suburbs, pushing on with perseverance and violence, and crowding on each other with such uncontrolled eagerness, that they in a short time constituted one mass of men, horses, and carriages, absolutely motionless, and indeed incapable of motion.

The flowing off of this immense crowd by one narrow passage became nearly impossible. Those who were following, under the influence of a stupid instinct, added to the incumbrance; not even attempting to enter the city by other avenues, for others in fact there were; but every thing was in such a state of disorganization that, during the whole of this dreadful day, not a single staff-officer appeared to point them out.

During ten hours, and with a thermometer at twenty-seven and even twenty-eight degrees of cold, thousands of soldiers who had now considered themselves safe were either frozen or suffocated, as was the case at the gates of Smolensk, and the bridges of the Berezina. Sixty thousand men had crossed that river, and since that time twenty thousand recruits had joined them: of these eighty thousand one-half had since been destroyed, and the greater part of them within the last four days, between Malodeczno and Wilna.

The capital of Lithuania was yet unacquainted with our disasters, when forty thousand famished men suddenly filled it with their groans and lamentations. At

sight so unexpected, its inhabitants became actually terrified. They closed their doors against the helpless intruders. Then it was indeed a most deplorable spectacle to see these wretched troops wandering about the streets, some mad with rage and others with despair, some threatening and others supplicating, attempting to break open the doors of the houses or magazines, or dragging themselves to the hospitals. Everywhere they were repulsed; at the magazines the most unreasonable formalities were deemed indispensable before relief could be afforded; for as the various corps were dissolved, and the soldiers belonging to them completely intermingled, all strictly regular distribution was become impossible.

There were in the magazines forty days' allowances of flour and bread, and thirty-six days' allowances of meat for a hundred thousand men. No chief would undertake to give an order for distributing to all who presented themselves. The administrators who had received these quantities were afraid of their responsibility; others dreaded the excess which famished soldiers would give way to when they were under the sole restraint of their own discretion. The administrators, moreover, were ignorant of the desperate situation in which we were; and, when in fact there was scarcely time left us for pillage, our comrades were left for many successive hours to perish by hunger in front of those immense supplies of provisions which the very next day fell into the power of the enemy!

From the barracks and hospitals they experienced equal repulse, but not from the living; for death alone decided and commanded there. Some few individuals still breathed there, who complained that for a long time they had been without beds, without straw, and almost utterly abandoned. The courts and corridors,

and even the various halls, were filled with piles of dead; they were, in fact, charnel-houses of pestilence.

At length the exertions of several chiefs, such as Eugene and Davoust, the compassion of the Lithuanians, and the avarice of some Jews opened to them a few houses of refuge. The astonishment felt by these unfortunate men on finding themselves sheltered once more in human habitations was truly remarkable. How delicious a nourishment did leavened bread now appear to them! What inexpressible satisfaction did they experience at being seated while they partook of it! And with what admiration were they a little afterwards impressed on seeing one feeble battalion fully armed, in complete order, and in new and splendid uniform! It seemed as if they had come back from the very extremities of the world; so far had they been torn asunder from their former habits and associations by the violence and continuity of their calamities; so profound had been the abyss from which they were now at last extricated!

But scarcely had they begun to taste this exquisite contrast to their late experience when the cannon of the Russians began to thunder over them and the city. These menacing sounds, the calls of the officers, the summons of the drums to arms, the clamours of a vast multitude of stragglers who were still arriving, filled Wilna with a second uproar. The enemy consisted of the advanced guard of Kutusof and of Tchap-litz, commanded by O'Rourke, Landskoi, and Seslawin. They were attacking the division Loison, which was at once protecting the city and the march of a column of dismounted cavalry who were proceeding by Newtroki upon Olita.

An attempt was at first made at resistance. De

Wrede and his Bavarians had likewise just joined the army by Naroczwiransky and Niamentchin. They were followed by Wittgenstein, who from Kamen and Vileika was marching upon our right flank at the same time that Kutusof and Tchitchakof were pursuing us. De Wrede had only two thousand men left; and with respect to Loison, including his division and the garrison of Wilna who had come as far as Smorgony to assist us, the frost had in the course of three days reduced them from fifteen thousand men to three thousand.

De Wrede defended Wilna on the side of Rukoni, but was compelled to give way after a noble effort. On his side, Loison with his division, who were nearer to Wilna, kept the enemy in check. Arms had actually been delivered to a Neapolitan division, who had even marched out of the city, but their muskets dropped from the benumbed hands of men who had thus been transplanted from under a burning sun to regions of ice. In less than an hour they all returned into the city unarmed, and the greater part of them maimed.

At the same time the *generale* was beat in the streets, but with no effect, the old guard itself, reduced now to only a few platoons, continuing dispersed. All were more busy about contending for their lives against frost and famine than against the enemy. But the alarm, "The Cossacks are coming," was soon heard in every part. This had long been the only signal to which the greater number had attended; it soon reverberated through the whole city, and the rout recommenced.

It was de Wrede by whom the alarm had been occasioned. That general had unexpectedly just presented himself at the royal head-quarters. "The enemy," he said, "was marching close upon his steps. The



The Bavarians were driven back into Wilna, which they were unable to defend." The tumult reached the ear of the king himself just at the same moment. Murat was confounded. Not thinking himself any longer master of the army, he could no longer be considered completely master of himself. He rushed from the palace, and made his way on foot through the crowd. He seemed apprehensive of an encounter in the midst of an incumbrance similar to that of the day before. He stopped, however, at the last house of the suburb, whence he despatched his orders, and where he waited the arrival of day and the army, leaving to Ney every thing else.

Wilna might have been kept possession of twenty-four hours longer, and a great number of men would have been in consequence saved. This fatal city still retained nearly twenty thousand, among whom were three hundred officers and seven generals. The greater number of them had received severer injuries from winter than from the enemy, who however assumed all the merit and triumph of it. Some others were still free from disease or injury, at least in appearance, but their moral strength was utterly gone. After having had the resolution to overcome so many and such great difficulties, they gave up when nearly approaching the desired haven, where in five days more they might have expected to arrive. They had at length reached a civilized city; and, rather than resolve to quit it for the desert, they delivered themselves up to whatever might happen, and fortune was unpropitious and cruel to them.

The Lithuanians, indeed, whom we were abandoning after having so far committed them, received and assisted some of our countrymen; but the Jews, whom we had protected, drove away the others. The spectacle

of so many evils irritated their cupidity. However, if their infamous avarice, speculating upon our miseries, had contented itself with selling us on the most extravagant terms some feeble assistance, history would have disdained to pollute her pages with the disgusting detail ; but to have decoyed our unfortunate friends into their houses for the purpose of plundering and stripping them, and afterwards, as soon as the Russians made their appearance, to push the naked and perishing victims out of their doors and windows, remorselessly leaving them to expire of cold in the streets, and even endeavouring to conciliate the Russians by the infliction of tortures on them there ; crimes of such atrocity and horror as these merit denunciation to present and future ages. Now that our hands are bound, it is possible that our indignation against these monsters may be the only punishment they will receive in this world, but at a future period the assassins will again rejoin their victims, and then undoubtedly the justice of God will abundantly avenge us !

On the 10th of December, Ney, who again volunteered the charge of the rear-guard, quitted the city, and immediately the Cossacks and Platof rushed into it, massacring all the unfortunate beings whom the Jews threw in their way. In the midst of this butchery a piquet of thirty French suddenly appeared, advancing from the bridge of the Vilia where they had been forgotten. At the sight of this new prey some thousands of Russian horsemen pressed forward, and uttering the most hideous yells assailed them on every side.

But the French officer had already ranged his soldiers in a circle. Without a moment's hesitation he ordered them to fire, and the next instant proceeded

to charge them. They all, however, fled before him; he remained master of the city; and, without feeling more surprise at the flight of the Cossacks than he did at their attack, he promptly availed himself of the opportunity afforded, wheeled quickly round, and reached the rear-guard without sustaining any loss.

He found it engaged with the advanced guard of Kutusof, and struggling hard to keep it in check; for a new catastrophe, which it sought in vain to cover, retained it near Wilna.

In that city, as before at Moscow, Napoleon had issued no order of retreat: he was desirous that our route should have no harbinger; that it should be announced only by its own appearance; that it should thus come suddenly and by surprise on our allies and their ministers; and that, in short, our army, availing itself of their first feelings of amazement, might be enabled to traverse their several territories before they were prepared to unite with the Russians for our complete destruction.

For this reason it was, that Lithuanians, strangers, and residents, and even his own minister at Wilna, had been deceived. They did not believe in our disaster till they became eye-witnesses of it; and in this respect the almost superstitious faith of all Europe in the infallibility of the genius of Napoleon was of great advantage to him against his allies. But this same confidence had also involved his adherents and friends in negligent security. At Wilna, as at Moscow, none of them had prepared against any serious movement.

This city contained a large part of the baggage of the army, and of its treasure, and of its provisions; a train of enormous waggons carrying the furniture and accommodations of the emperor, a great quantity of

artillery, and a great number of wounded. Our rout had come upon them like an unexpected tempest. The fall of the thunderbolt had frightened some into stupid activity, and rendered others stupidly motionless. Orders, men, horses, and carriages were all in complete opposition and collision.

In the midst of this tumult, several chiefs had hastily forwarded from the city towards Kowno every thing that they were able to collect and move off; but about a league on that road this heavy and disordered column had just had to encounter the height and defile of Ponari.

In our triumphant progress towards Russia, this wooded acclivity had been considered by our hussars only as a fortunate accident among the varieties of ground, as it enabled them to survey the entire plain of Wilna, and to form an estimate of their enemies. Beyond this, its steep, although short, ascent had been scarcely noticed. In a regular retreat, it would have offered a good position for facing round and arresting the advance of the enemy; but in an irregular flight, where every thing that might in other circumstances be serviceable becomes pernicious, where in its precipitation and disorder the retiring party turn every thing against themselves, this hill with its defile, became an insurmountable obstacle, a wall of ice, against which all our efforts were powerless. It kept back all, baggage, treasure, and wounded. The evil was sufficiently great to constitute an epoch in the long series of our disasters.

In reality, our money, our honour, the remnant both of our discipline and our strength, all were at this spot lost. After fifteen hours of useless exertion, when the drivers and escorting parties saw the king and the whole column of fugitives pass them, by

winding along the sides of the mountain; when, turning their eyes towards the point whence they heard the discharge of cannon and musketry, which were approaching nearer every instant, they perceived Ney himself withdrawing with three thousand men, the remainder of de Wrede's corps and Loison's division; when, in short, looking immediately around where they stood, they saw the mountain covered with overthrown cannon and broken carriages, with men and horses thrown to the ground, struggling, and expiring upon one another, they no longer continued their useless efforts, and thought only of baffling the rapacity of their enemies by anticipating the plunder themselves.

One of the money-waggon's had accidentally burst open, and furnished the signal: every one then rushed on these carriages, and breaking the chests open, snatched hastily from them all that they found most valuable. The soldiers of the rear-guard, who were passing while these irregularities were proceeding, threw away their arms to load themselves with spoil: and so eagerly were they absorbed by the occupation, that they no longer heard the whistling of the enemy's balls, or the dreadful howls of the Cossacks who were pursuing them.

It has been even said, that the Cossacks mingled in this scene of pillage without being perceived. For a few moments, Frenchmen and Tartars, friends and enemies, were confounded in one common work of rapacity. Russians and French forgetting their hostility were seen plundering the same caisson. Ten millions in gold and silver disappeared.

But, along with these excesses and horrors, were also to be observed some noble acts of self-devotion. There were individuals who abandoned every thing

to carry off upon their own shoulders and if possible to save some helpless wounded; others who, not being able to extricate from the rush and tumult their half-frozen comrades, perished while protecting them from the plunder of their countrymen and the blows of their enemies.

On the most exposed part of the mountain, one of the emperor's officers, count de Turenne kept the Cossacks in check, and, notwithstanding their shouts of rage and discharges of arms, distributed in their full view Napoleon's private treasure among those of the guards within his reach. These brave men, fighting with one hand and with the other receiving the spoils of their chief, were actually enabled to preserve what was thus delivered to them. Long after the distribution, and when every danger had vanished, each of them returned with the utmost fidelity what had been intrusted to his hands. Not a single piece was wanting.

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE catastrophe of Ponari was so much the more disgraceful as it might easily have been foreseen, and still more easily avoided; for the hill might have been turned by its sides. Our wrecks, however, served to stop the Cossacks. While they were collecting their spoil, Ney with a few hundreds of French and Bavarians sustained the retreat as far as Evé. As this was his last effort, it may be proper to particularize his method of proceeding, that which he had followed from the time of quitting Wiazma, from the 3rd of

November, for thirty-seven days and thirty-seven nights.

Every day, at five in the evening, he took up a position, stopped the advance of the Russians, and gave his soldiers time to eat and to rest ; and at ten o'clock resumed his march. During the whole of the night, he pushed on before him the numerous stragglers by commands, entreaties, and sometimes even by blows. About daybreak, at seven, he stopped and again took up a position, and remained under arms, and in readiness for the enemy, till ten in the morning. The Russians then reappeared, and it became necessary to fight till evening, gaining on the rear as much or as little ground as possible. That, at first, conformed to the general order of march, and latterly depended upon circumstances.

For, during a long time, this rear-guard consisted only of two thousand men, then of a thousand, afterwards of about five hundred, and at last of sixty men ; and yet Berthier, whether from policy or from routine habits of business, had made no change in the forms connected with it. He always treated it as a corps of thirty-five thousand men ; he detailed with the most solemn and almost ludicrous gravity in his instructions all the different positions that certain divisions and regiments in it, which in fact no longer existed, should take up and retain till the following day. And every night, when at the urgent solicitations of Ney, it became necessary for him to go and awake the king, to compel him to recommence his route, he constantly expressed the same astonishment.

Such was the manner in which Ney conducted the retreat from Wiazma to a few wersts beyond Evé. There, agreeably to his usual practice, the marshal

had stopped the Russians, and was devoting to rest the first hours of darkness, when about ten o'clock at night, he and de Wrede perceived that they were left alone. Their soldiers had quitted them, as well as their arms, which they saw glittering in piles near the fires which had been thus abandoned.

Fortunately, the severity of the cold, which had completed the despondence and dismay of our own troops, had also paralyzed the strength of the enemy. Ney with difficulty got up with his column, consisting now of mere fugitives; a few Cossacks were driving them forward, without endeavouring either to kill or take them prisoners. This might perhaps arise from some feelings of pity, for in time men become tired of every thing: the dreadful extent of our miseries might perhaps have shocked the Russians themselves, and made them think that they had been sufficiently avenged, for they in many instances proved themselves generous foes; or, possibly, the relaxation of their efforts against us might be owing to their being impeded and weighed down by plunder. It is, moreover, possible that, in the obscurity of night, they did not clearly perceive that their enemies were unarmed.

Winter, the formidable ally of the Muscovites, had sold them his assistance at a high price. Their disorder pursued our disorder. We recovered many prisoners who had several times escaped from their frozen hands, and impaired or inadvertent eyes. They had, at first, marched in the midst of their shapeless and scattered column, without being noticed. There were some who then seized a favourable opportunity, ventured to attack single Russian soldiers, and take from them their provision, their uniform, and even their arms, which they applied to their own use. Thus disguised, they boldly



intermingled with their conquerors ; and so great was the disorganization, such was the stupid inadvertence, the prostration of intellect, into which this army had fallen, that these prisoners marched among them for a whole month without being recognised. Kutusof's hundred thousand men were at that time reduced to thirty-five thousand. Of Wittgenstein's fifty thousand Russians scarcely fifteen thousand were now remaining. Wilson asserts that of a reinforcement of ten thousand men, who quitted the interior of Russia with every preparation and precaution possible against the effects of winter, only seventeen hundred arrived at Wilna. But the head of a column was quite sufficient against our now unarmed soldiers. Ney in vain attempted to rally a few of them ; and the man who had hitherto, almost alone, retained some power and command over the rout, was now compelled to follow it. He arrived with it at Kowno, the last town in the Russian empire.

At length, on the 13th of December, after having marched forty-six days under so galling and dreadful a yoke, they reached a friendly territory. Immediately, without halting, without even looking behind them, the greater number plunged into the extensive forests of Polish Prussia, and there dispersed. But there were some who, on reaching the allies' bank of the river, stopped for a moment to look back. There they took a last view of that land of sorrow and anguish from which they had just escaped ; and when reflecting that from this very spot five months before their innumerable eagles had started in the delightful anticipation of glory and victory, we are told that tears fell from their eyes, and that their sobs and groans were distinctly audible.

“ Here then, at last, they had reached that bank

which had so recently been lined with their glittering bayonets! that allied ground which, only five months since, disappearing under the footsteps of the vast united army had seemed metamorphosed into moving valleys and hills of men and horses! There were the very vales from which, under the rays of an ardent sun, issued the three long columns of dragoons and cuirassiers, like three dazzling rivers of steel and brass. Alas! men and arms, and eagles and horses, even that brilliant sun, and that frontier river which they had crossed so full of ardour and hope, all had now disappeared! The Niemen was now nothing but a prolonged mass of intercepted pieces of ice, cemented and rendered immoveable by the severity of winter. Instead of the three French bridges brought from a distance of five hundred leagues, and laid on with such daring promptitude and rapidity, one Russian bridge alone was standing. In short, instead of the numberless warriors, instead of their four hundred thousand comrades, so often their associates in conquest, and who had rushed forward to take possession of Russian territory with such pride and transport, they beheld returning from its pale and ice-bound deserts, only one thousand infantry and cavalry still armed, nine pieces of cannon, and about twenty thousand wretched stragglers, covered with rags, hanging down their heads, with sunk and glazed eyes, earthy and livid complexions, and squalid and frozen beards; some disputing in silence the narrow passage of the bridge, which notwithstanding the smallness of their number was insufficient to accommodate them while thus rushing and crowding towards it; others scattered over the rough and frozen river itself, struggling on with effort and difficulty, and dragging themselves from one slippery point to another; and this was the

whole of the grand army ! And many of these fugitives, it was to be observed, were recruits who had only recently arrived to join it !”

Two kings, a prince, eight marshals, followed by a few officers, some generals on foot, dispersed and without attendants, and a few hundred men of the old guard still armed, constituted its only remains ; these were its only representatives.

Or rather it should be said that it still breathed in all its life and vigour in marshal Ney. I appeal, comrades, to you ! I appeal to our allies, and even to our enemies ! Let us pay to the memory of an unfortunate hero the homage which is so justly due ; and facts will be amply sufficient for this purpose. All were in a state of flight ; and Murat himself, passing through Kowno as through Wilna, issued, but afterwards countermanded, orders for rallying at Tilsit, and at last fixed upon Gumbinnen. Ney afterwards entered Kowno, accompanied only by his aides-de-camp ; for all around him had deserted their colours, or sunk under their difficulties. From the time of his leaving Wiazma, this had been the fourth rear-guard that had been destroyed under his hands ; but winter and famine had contributed far more to that destruction than the Russians. For the fourth time he remained alone in the presence of the enemy ; and, still firm and undaunted, he endeavoured to obtain a fifth rear-guard.

The marshal found in Kowno a company of artillerymen, consisting of three hundred Germans who constituted the garrison of the place, and general Marchand, with four hundred men. Of these he assumed the command. And in the first place he inspected the city, to reconnoitre its position, and if possible to rally any troops that might remain in it. He found, however, none but sick and wounded, who were attempt-

ing, in tears, to follow our wretched route. For the eighth time, since leaving Moscow, it had become necessary to abandon them in mass in their hospitals, as they had been abandoned in detail through the whole of our retreat, on all our fields of battle, and at all our bivouacs.

Some thousands of soldiers covered the great square and the adjoining streets, but they lay extended and stiff in front of the magazines of brandy, which they had broken open, and from which they had drunk in death, expecting to derive from them life. Such were the only succours left him by Murat. Ney saw himself left in Russia with only seven hundred men, and those only foreign recruits. At Kowno, as well as after the disasters of Wiazma, of Smolensk, of the Berezina, and of Wilna, to him was once more confided the honour of our arms, and the whole peril attending the concluding steps of our retreat. He willingly undertook the charge.

On the 14th, at break of day, the attack of the Russians commenced. While one of their columns presented itself boldly on the Wilna road, another crossed the Niemen, upon the ice above the town, advanced into the Prussian territory, and, elated with delight and triumph at being the first to pass its own frontier, proceeded to the bridge at Kowno, to close that passage against Ney, and cut him off from all retreat.

The first firing was heard at the Wilna gate. Ney hastened thither; he was resolved to remove Platof's cannon by his own; but he found that his own pieces were already spiked, and that his artillery-men had taken flight. Enraged almost to madness, he flew with his drawn sword at the officer who had commanded them, and would have killed him on the spot, if his

aide-de-camp had not fortunately parried the blow aimed at him, and assisted his escape.

Ney then summoned his infantry, but of the two weak battalions which composed it, one only had taken up arms. It consisted of the three hundred Germans of the garrison. He drew them up in order, addressed them in a few words of animation, and, as the enemy was now fast approaching, was just about to give the command to fire, when a Russian bullet, after carrying away before it the top of the palisade, broke the thigh of their colonel. The officer fell to the ground, and, feeling that his wound was mortal, he coolly took one of his pistols, and blew out his brains before his men. At this act of despair, his soldiers were completely shocked and panic-struck, and instantly throwing down their arms in horror and consternation, betook themselves to flight.

Ney, thus abandoned by all, yet neither abandoned himself nor his post. After some useless efforts to check the fugitives, he collected their arms, which were loaded; he became once more a soldier, and for the fifth time presented an intrepid front to some thousands of Russians. His audacity checked them; it inspired some sense of shame into a few of the artillery-men, who immediately imitated and supported their marshal; and it afforded time to his aide-de-camp Kyemès and general Gerard to collect thirty soldiers, and bring up two or three light pieces; and also to generals Ledru and Marchand for collecting the only battalion then remaining.

But just at this moment commenced, beyond the Niemen and near the bridge of Cowno, the second attack by the Russians: it was about half-past two o'clock. Ney despatched Ledru and Marchand, with their four hundred men to retake and secure that passage

and himself, without relaxing his efforts, or disturbing himself about what was going on behind him, fought at the head of thirty men, and maintained his ground till night at the Wilna gate. He then passed through Kowno, and over the Niemen, fighting the whole of the way, never hastening into flight, always the last in the march, supporting to the very last moment the honour of our arms, and for the hundredth time in the course of forty days and forty nights, ready to sacrifice his own life and liberty to save a few more Frenchmen from the dreadful wreck. He at length quitted that fatal country, the last man that left it of the grand army, proving to the world that even fortune herself is powerless against the energy of true valour, and that the genuine hero converts every thing into glory, even the most serious and accumulated disasters.

It was eight o'clock at night, when he reached the allied bank. Then, seeing the catastrophe accomplished, Marchand driven back to the entrance of the bridge, and the Wilkowsky road, which Murat had taken, covered with enemies, he threw himself on the right, and plunged into the woods and disappeared.

## CHAPTER V.

WHEN Murat reached Gumbinnen, he was exceedingly surprised to find Nty there, and to learn that from Kowno, the army had marched without a rear-guard. Fortunately, the pursuit of the Russians after they had recovered possession of their territory had relaxed. They appeared to hesitate on the Prussian frontier, in

doubt whether to enter upon it as allies or enemies. Murat availed himself of this hesitation to stop for several days at Gumbinnen, and to direct upon the towns bordering on the Vistula the remains of the different corps.

At the moment that he thus distributed the army he called together the chiefs of it. At this council he seems to have been inspired by some evil genius. We would willingly suppose him to have been influenced merely by the embarrassment which he felt in the presence of those warriors, at the precipitation of his flight, or by temporary exasperation against the emperor for attaching to him so fearful a responsibility, or by the sense of shame on reappearing, in the very midst of nations which had been the most oppressed by our victories, in a state of such defeat and discomfiture. As, however, his words bear naturally a far more criminal construction, and a construction which his actions by no means contradicted; as, in fact, they were the first indications of his defection, it is impossible for history to suppress them.

This warrior who had ascended the throne solely by the right of conquest, had now returned conquered. From the first moment of his entering on the territory which he had subjugated, he felt as if it was giving way under his feet, and as if his crown was tottering upon his head. A thousand times in the course of this campaign, he had exposed himself to the most imminent dangers; but the monarch who had felt not the slightest fear of meeting death as a soldier of the advanced guard, could not support the apprehension of living without a crown; and on the present occasion, we find him in the midst of the chiefs, of whom his brother had him appointed the head, accusing the ambition of that brother, in which he had participated, in order

to absolve himself from the neglect or violation of his trust.

He exclaimed, "That it was no longer possible to serve a madman; that there was no longer any security in adhering to his cause; that not a single prince in Europe relied either upon his word or treaties. He bitterly regretted his rejecting the propositions of England; had he not done so," he added, "he should still have been a powerful sovereign, like the emperor of Austria and the king of Prussia."

Here he was interrupted by Davoust, who observed with great animation, "The king of Prussia and the emperor of Austria are monarchs by the grace of God; sovereigns, whose thrones are cemented by the power of time, and the long usage and hereditary attachment of their subjects. But you," said he, "are king only by the grace of Napoleon, and of French blood; and you can continue king only by the power of Napoleon and by alliance with France. You are blinded by black ingratitude!" And he immediately added, "that he should forthwith denounce him to his emperor." The other chiefs said nothing. They considered the language of the king as a mere burst of vexation, and attributed to his uncontrollable impetuosity only those expressions of which the personal animosity and naturally suspicious temper of Davoust had too clearly and fully comprehended the meaning.

Murat was abashed and confounded. He felt that he was guilty. Thus was extinguished the first spark of that treason, which at a later period was destined to prove the destruction of France. History notices it only with regret, as the subsequent repentance and the punishment were equal to the guilt.

It became necessary, in a short time, to appear in



all our distress and humiliation at Königsberg. That grand army, which in the course of the preceding twenty years had marched in triumph through all the capitals of Europe, now for the first time reappeared mutilated, disarmed, and fugitive in one of those which its glory had reduced to the greatest abasement. Its inhabitants hastened into the streets as we passed along to observe and reckon our wounds, and to estimate by the number and extent of our misfortunes the foundation on which they might build their hopes: we were forced to regale their eager and delighted eyes with our miseries, to submit to pass under the yoke of their delight, and, dragging our squalid and miserable forms in full review before their detested scrutiny, to march under the almost insupportable weight of calamity which the hatred of the spectators beheld even with transport.

Yet the feeble remnant of the grand army did not give way even under this dreadful and hateful burden. Its spectral shade, already nearly dethroned, still bore a lofty and imposing attitude, and retained its air of sovereignty. Conquered as it was by the elements, in the face merely of men it preserved its commanding and victorious demeanour.

The Germans, on their part, whether from their natural insusceptibility, or from apprehension of the consequences of opposition, received us submissively. Their hatred disguised itself under a cold civility; and, as they seldom act from the sudden impulse of the moment, while they were waiting for a signal, they were compelled to furnish relief to our distresses. Königsberg was in a short time unable to contain them. Winter which had thus far inveterately pursued us, now suddenly left us, and in a single night the thermometer fell twenty degrees.

This sudden transition was fatal to us. A great number of soldiers and generals, whom the bracing power of the atmosphere had supported hitherto by the continual irritation it occasioned, now fell into a state of rapid decomposition. Lariboissiere, general-in-chief of artillery, became a victim; Eblé, the pride of the army, soon followed him. Every succeeding day, and every hour, fresh losses struck us with dismay.

In the midst of this general mourning, a popular commotion and a letter from Macdonald connected with all these calamities a feeling of despair. The sick could no longer entertain the hope of even dying in a state of freedom: it became necessary either to abandon an expiring friend or brother, or drag him on in that state as far as Elbing. The insurrection was alarming only as a symptom of the general state of feeling, and was soon put down; but the intelligence from Macdonald was of the most serious and decisive import.

## CHAPTER VI.

ON the part of that marshal, the whole of the war had consisted in nothing more than a rapid march from Tilsit to Mittau, a deployment from the mouth of the Aa as far as Dunabourg, and finally, a continued defensive position in front of Riga. This inevitably resulted from the composition of the army under him, which was almost wholly Prussian, from his position, and from the orders given him by Napoleon.

It was a daring determination of the emperor to confide his left wing, as well as his right wing and

his retreat, to the support of Prussians and Austrians. It was remarked that, at the same time, he had dispersed the Poles through his whole army, and it was the opinion of many that he would have acted more wisely if he had consolidated the zealous attachment of the Poles, and dispersed the hatred of the others. But natives of the country were everywhere wanted as interpreters, spies, and guides, and also for the impetuous ardour which they displayed at the real point of attack. The Prussians and Austrians, moreover, would probably not have submitted to be so dispersed. On the left, Macdonald, with seven thousand Bavarians, Westphalians and Poles, appeared sufficient to guard at once against the Prussians and the Russians.

In the march forward, there had been at first no other occupation for them than driving before them a few posts, and taking possession of a few magazines. There were afterwards a few skirmishes between the Aa and Riga. The Prussians in a smart action took Eckau from the Russian general Lewis; and then both parties remained quiet for twenty days. Macdonald employed this time in gaining possession of Dunabourg, and in procuring from Mittau the heavy artillery necessary for the siege of Riga.

On ascertaining his approach on the 23rd of August, the commander-in-chief at Riga, ordered a *sortie* of the whole body of his troops, in three columns. The two weakest were to make two false attacks, one by following up the coast of the Baltic sea, and the other directly upon Mittau. The third column, which was of considerable strength, and commanded by Lewis, was at the same time to carry Eckau, drive the Prussians into the Aa, cross that river, and capture or destroy the park of artillery.

Every thing succeeded except beyond the Aa, where Grawert, at length supported by Kleist, repulsed Lewis, and, vigorously pursuing the track of the Russians as far as Eckau, completely defeated him at that place. Lewis fell back in absolute rout as far as the Duna, which he crossed by a ford, leaving behind him a great number of prisoners.

Thus far Macdonald had been perfectly satisfied. It is even said that, at Smolensk, Napoleon entertained thoughts of raising York to the rank of marshal of the empire, at the same time that he caused Schwartzenberg to be nominated field-marshal at Vienna. The claims, however, of these two chiefs to promotion were by no means equal.

Dangerous symptoms began to appear in both our wings, and among the Austrians were inflamed by the officers: their general, however, kept them to their duty and in our alliance; he even communicated to us the disaffected disposition that prevailed among them, and suggested means for preventing its contagion from extending to our other allies who were intermingled with his own troops.

With our left wing it was otherwise; the Prussian army was conducting itself with good faith and without any advertance to past grievances, while its general was conspiring against us. Accordingly, in the various actions which took place, the commander of the right wing was always zealously urging on his troops, who on their part manifested decided reluctance; while the troops of the left wing pushed forward their commander, who alone felt averse to the service.

Among the Prussians, the officers, the soldiers, Grawert himself, a veteran, loyal, and honourable warrior, without a particle of the politician in his composition. all did their duty bravely and freely.

Whenever they were unrestricted by their chief they fought like lions; they were resolved, they said, to efface from the recollection of the French the disgrace of their discomfiture in 1806, to reconquer our esteem, to vanquish in the presence of the men who had vanquished them, to prove that their defeat had been entirely attributable to their government, and that they had been deserving of a better fate.

Yorck had higher views. He belonged to the society of "The Friends of Virtue," the bond of union in which was hatred of the French, and the object of which was to drive them entirely out of Germany. But Napoleon was still victorious, and the Prussian was afraid of committing himself. Besides, the justice of Macdonald, his mildness, and his military reputation had won the affection of his troops. "Never had they been so happy," the Prussians said, "as under the command of a Frenchman." In fact, being united with the conquerors and enjoying together with them the rights of conquest, these previously conquered men had easily permitted themselves to be won over by the irresistible attraction of belonging to the victorious party.

Every thing concurred to promote these kindly feelings. Their administration was conducted by an intendant and agents selected from their own army. They lived in abundance; it was, however, on this very subject that the quarrel originated between Macdonald and Yorck, and that the hatred of the latter found an opportunity for its diffusion.

In the first instance, complaints came in from the country, against this administration. In a short time, a French commissioner arrived, and, whether from rivalry, or from a spirit of justice, he accused the Prussian intendant of harassing the country by

enormous requisitions of cattle. "He sent them," it was said, "into Prussia, which had been exhausted by our passage through it: the army had been defrauded of them, and a scarcity would soon be felt in it." According to him, this manœuvre was known and connived at by Yorck. Macdonald gave credit to the accusation and discharged the intendant, conferring the administration upon the accuser; and Yorck, in the bitterness and exasperation of his feelings, thought now of nothing but revenge.

Napoleon was then at Moscow. The Prussian observed him with the keenest vigilance; he looked forward with delight to the natural consequences of his temerity; it seems as if he had yielded even somewhat precipitately to the temptation thus offered him, and anticipated, as certain, the course of events which appeared so probable. On the 29th of September, the Russian general was apprized that Yorck had uncovered Mittau; and, whether he had received reinforcements, for in fact two divisions had just arrived from Finland, or whether from reliance of a different description, he ventured into that city, recaptured it, and was preparing to follow up his advantage. The grand park of siege-artillery was on the point of being carried off; Yorck, if we may credit certain witnesses who were present, had left it unprotected; he made no effort to resist, and perfidiously exposed it to the enemy.

The chief of the staff, it is said, was perfectly indignant at this act of treachery, and represented to his general in the strongest terms that he was about to ruin himself, together with the honour of the Prussian arms; and Yorck, it is stated, was so struck by the representation that, from fear of consequences, he permitted Kleist to put himself in motion. His

approach was enough. But on this occasion, although a regular battle took place, there were scarcely four hundred men lost on both sides. This petty warfare being over, each party resumed its former position.

## CHAPTER VII.

ON receiving this intelligence, Macdonald was greatly disturbed and irritated, and hastened away from his right wing, where, perhaps, he had continued too long at a distance from the Prussians. The surprise of Mittau, the danger which the siege-artillery had been in, the obstinacy of Yorck in not pursuing the enemy, and various secret details which reached him from the head-quarters of that general excited in him a high degree of alarm. But in proportion as suspicions were well-founded, the more necessary it was to dissemble: in fact, the Prussian army had by no means been an accomplice in the conspiracy of its chief, but had fought intrepidly and honourably, the enemy had quitted his hold, appearances had been kept up, and policy required that Macdonald should have appeared satisfied.

He did, however, precisely the reverse. His quick temper, or his high principles of honour, would not permit him to dissemble. He broke out in reproaches against the Prussian general, at the very moment when his troops, priding themselves on their success, were expecting praises and rewards. Yorck knew but too well how to induce his soldiers, thus disappointed in their expectations, to participate in the disgust of a humiliation which was intended to be exclusively his own.

We perceive in Macdonald's letters the just grounds which existed for his displeasure. He wrote to Yorck, "that it was disgraceful to him to suffer his posts to be continually attacked, without once annoying the enemy in his turn; that since he had been in front of the Russians, he had done nothing but repel their assaults, without having in any one instance taken up the offensive, although his officers and troops had been actuated by the best possible spirit." This was precisely the case, for, generally speaking, it was surprising to observe the ardour and zeal of these Germans in a cause in which they were not naturally interested, and which, indeed, they might have been expected to regard as hostile.

All of them rushed emulously into the midst of dangers, in order to obtain the esteem of the grand army and a eulogium from Napoleon. Their princes preferred the plain French silver star of honour to the most superb ribands of other orders. The genius of Napoleon seemed to have fascinated or subdued them all a second time. As magnificent in remuneration as he was prompt and terrible in punishment, he appeared to resemble one of the grand centres of nature, and to be a reservoir and dispenser of every description of good. With many of the Germans, moreover, there existed also something of a mystic admiration for a life which appeared to be a series of marvellous adventures, and was particularly adapted to their national taste.

But their enthusiastic admiration depended upon success, and already his fatal retreat had commenced; already, from the north to the south of Europe, the outcry of Russia for vengeance echoed back completely that from Spain: they crossed each other on the still enslaved countries of Germany, and resounded



through all her territories. The two vast conflagrations existing at the opposite extremities of Europe were hastening to unite in its centre ; they lighted up in it the splendour of day, and emitted innumerable sparks which found a ready admission into hearts animated by a patriotic hatred, which was raised by mysticism to the fervour of fanaticism. In proportion as our routed fugitives approached Germany, a low and hollow sound was heard issuing from its bosom, a murmur as yet hesitating, uncertain, and fearful, but at the same time nearly universal.

The students of the several universities, who had eagerly cherished the ideas of independence inspired by their ancient constitutions, which confirm to them a variety of valuable privileges, filled also with animating recollections of the chivalric renown which their country merited and enjoyed in former ages, and entertaining on behalf of that country a jealousy against all foreign glory as interfering with it, had continued from the beginning hostile to us. Perfect strangers to the calculations of policy, they had never been in reality subdued by our conquest. As soon as the effect of that conquest began to wane, similar feelings to those of the students operated also on the politician, and even on the soldier. The association of "The Friends of Virtue" gave to the popular movement the appearance of a vast organized combination ; a few chiefs really conspired, but there was no general conspiracy ; it was a mere spontaneous impulse, a sensation simultaneous and universal.

Alexander very skilfully inflamed this disposition by his proclamations, by his addresses to the Germans, and by conciliating such of them as became his prisoners. With respect to the monarchs of Europe, himself and Bernadotte were as yet the only ones who

had marched respectively at the head of their subjects. The others, restrained either by policy or honour, had all suffered their subjects to anticipate them.

This contagion had found admission into the grand army ; since the passage of the Berezina, Napoleon had been warned of it. Communications had taken place between the Bavarian, Saxon, and Austrian generals. On the left, the disaffection of Yorck rapidly increased, and gained over a part of his troops ; all the enemies of France were uniting ; and Macdonald, surprised and astonished, had just had to reject with disdain the perfidious suggestions of an aide-de-camp of Moreau. The reputation of our victories, however, had sunk so deep in the minds of the Germans, they had been so completely subdued and broken down, that it required some time to enable them to rise

On the 15th of November, Macdonald perceiving that the left of the line of the Russians was extended too far from Riga, between him and the Duna, ordered a series of false attacks to be made on the whole of their front, and made a real one upon their centre, which he rapidly dashed through, advancing as far as the river near Dahlenkirchen. The whole left of the Russians, Lewis and five thousand men, were thus cut off from their retreat, and driven back upon the Duna.

Lewis sought in vain for an outlet ; he found the enemy wherever he turned, and lost in the first onset two battalions and one squadron. His whole force would have been captured if he had been more closely pressed ; but he was allowed both space and time to recover himself ; as the cold was increasing, and the general saw no possibility of his escaping by land, he ventured to trust the yet feeble ice, which was beginning to cover the river. He ordered a platform of planks

and straw to be laid over it, and thus crossing the Duna at two points between Frederickstadt and Lindau re-entered Riga just as his companions had begun to despair of his safety.

On the day following this action Macdonald became apprized of the retreat of Napoleon towards Smolensk, but not of the disorganization of the army. A few days afterwards, sinister reports reached him of the capture of Minsk. He was becoming more and more anxious and agitated when, on the 4th of December, he received a letter from Murat, grossly inflating the victory of the Berezina, and announcing the capture of nine thousand Russians, nine stands of colours, and twelve pieces of cannon. The admiral, it stated, was reduced to thirteen thousand men.

On the 3rd of December the Russians at Riga were again repulsed by the Prussians in one of their sorties. Yorck, either from prudence or from duty, restrained himself. Macdonald had been reconciled to him; and so late as the 19th of December, twelve days after Napoleon's departure, and eight days after the capture of Wilna by Kutusof, in short when Macdonald commenced his retreat, the Prussian army continued faithful.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**THE** order for Macdonald to retreat slowly upon Tilsit, was despatched from Wilna, on the 9th of December, by the hands of a Prussian officer. It was transmitted only by one channel, and no idea seems to have suggested itself of making use of Lithuanians to convey a message of such vast importance. Thus absurdly

and carelessly was hazarded the safety of the last army remaining, and which might be almost said to have remained untouched. This order, written at only four days' distance from Macdonald, was delayed on the road, and took nine days in reaching him.

The marshal directed his retreat on Tilsit, by passing between Telzs and Szawlia. Yorck and the greater part of the Prussians constituting his rear-guard marched at one day's distance from him, in contact with the Russians and left entirely to their own conduct. Some have made this a reproach against Macdonald; but the greater number have left the question undecided, alleging that in a position so very delicate and critical confidence and suspicion must be equally dangerous.

Those who adopt this latter opinion, observe that the French marshal did all that prudence required of him in keeping with himself one of Yorck's divisions; the other, which was commanded by Massenbach, was under the direction of the French general Bachelu, and formed the advanced guard. The Prussian army was thus divided into two corps, with Macdonald between them, who seemed to think that one was a security for the good behaviour of the other.

At first all went on well, although danger existed every where, in front, behind, and on the flank; for the grand army of Kutusof had already sent on three advanced guards to intercept the duke of Tarentum's retreat. Macdonald fell in with one of these at Kelm, with another at Piklupenen, and with the third at Tilsit. The ardour of the Prussian black hussars and dragoons appeared to redouble. The Russian hussars of Ysum were defeated and cut to pieces at Kelm. On the 27th of December, after a ten hours' march, these Prussian troops came in sight of Piklupenen and

the Russian brigade of Laskow, and, without stopping to take breath, attacked and dispersed them, taking two battalions prisoners. On the following day, they retook Tilsit from the Russian general Tettenborn.

Macdonald had several days before this received a letter from Berthier, dated at Antonowo on the 14th of December, informing him that the army was no longer in existence, and that it was necessary for him to reach the Pregel as soon as possible, that he might cover Königsberg, and be able to make good his retreat upon Elbing and Marienburg. The marshal had concealed this intelligence from the Prussians. Hitherto the cold, and the forced marches, had drawn from them no complaint; no indication of disaffection had appeared among them; brandy and provisions had been always abundant.

On the 28th, however, when general Bachelu was extending his force on the right towards Regnitz, in order to drive out the Russians who had taken refuge there from Tilsit, the Prussian officers began to complain of the fatigue of their troops; their advanced guard, marching on very reluctantly and incautiously, suffered themselves to be surprised, and were thrown into confusion. Bachelu, however, rallied them, and renewed the action, and entered Regnitz.

Macdonald about this time, having reached Tilsit, was waiting there for the arrival of Yorck and the remainder of the Russian army, who however came not. On the 29th, the officers and the orders that he sent to them were multiplied without any effect. No news transpired of Yorck. On the 30th, Macdonald's anxiety had very painfully increased, and is fully depicted in one of his letters, of that date, in which, however, he does not yet openly express his suspicions of any defection. He observed "that he

could not comprehend the causes of such delay; that a multitude of officers and emissaries had been despatched to Yorck with his orders to rejoin him, and that he had received no answer. Thus, with the enemy rapidly advancing upon him, he had been compelled to suspend his retreat, for he could not prevail upon himself to abandon that corps, and retreat without Yorck; and yet the delay would perhaps be fatal to him."

The letter concluded with these words: "I have exhausted myself in conjectures. Were I in my present circumstances to continue the retreat, what would the emperor say to my doing so? What would be the judgment of the army, of France and of Europe? Would it not bring a stain upon the tenth corps which it would be impossible ever to expunge, voluntarily to abandon a part of its troops, without any other compulsion than that of prudence? Oh, no! whatever may be the event, I willingly resign and devote myself as a victim, provided that I might be the only one:" he ended with wishing the French general "that repose which his melancholy and anxious situation had long withheld from himself."

On the same day he recalled Bachelu and the Prussian cavalry who were still in Regnitz to Tilsit. It was night. Bachelu gave instructions for complying with the order, but the Prussian colonels refused to obey them, alleging for their refusal various pretexts. They said "that the roads were impracticable. It was not usual or right to make men march, at such a dreadful season, and at such an hour. They were responsible for their regiments to their king." The French general was astonished, and commanded instant silence and obedience. His firmness prevailed, and they obeyed although slowly. A Russian general

had insinuated himself into their ranks; he urged them to deliver up to him this only Frenchman whom they had among them, and under whose command they were: but the Prussians, willing as they were to abandon Bachelu, could not be prevailed upon to betray him; and at length they began their march.

In Regnitz, at eight o'clock at night, they had refused to mount their horses; at Tilsit, which they reached at two in the morning, they refused to alight from them. However, at five all had entered the place, and, as order appeared to be restored, the general retired to take some rest. But their obedience had been only dissembled. As soon as the Prussians saw that they were no longer watched, they resumed their arms, left their quarters, and with Massenbach at their head quitted Tilsit in silence, and under cover of the night. The dawn of the last day of 1812, apprized Macdonald that the Prussian army had deserted him.

It was Yorck who, instead of rejoining him, had detached from him Massenbach, whom he had just recalled. His defection, which had commenced on the 26th of December, was now completed. On the 30th of December, a convention between Yorck and the Russian general Dibich had been concluded at Taurogen. "The Prussian troops were to be cantoned on their own frontiers, and to remain neutral for two months, even if their government should disapprove this armistice. On the expiration of that term the roads should be open to them to rejoin the French troops if their king persisted in commanding it."

Yorck, and more particularly Massenbach, either through apprehensions from the Polish division with which they were united, or from respect for Macdonald, conducted their defection with considerable decorum. They both wrote to the marshal. Yorck an-

nounced to him the convention just concluded by him, which he coloured and attempted to justify by specious pretexts. "He had been reduced to it by fatigue and necessity:" but he added, "that whatever judgment the world might form of his conduct it would give him very little uneasiness; that it had been adopted by him from a consideration of what was due to his troops, and after the most deliberate reflection; and finally, that, whatever appearances might indicate, he had been guided only by the purest motives." Massenbach excused himself for going off clandestinely. "He had been desirous to avoid a sensation most afflicting to his heart; and he had been apprehensive lest the sentiments of respect and esteem which he should never cease to entertain for the marshal might have interfered with the performance of what he deemed his duty."

Macdonald thus saw himself suddenly reduced from twenty-nine thousand men to only nine thousand; but, considering the anxiety in which he had lived for the last two days, it was some relief to have it in any way terminated.

## CHAPTER IX.

Thus commenced the defection of our allies. I will not sit in judgment on the morality of this proceeding, but leave it to be decided by posterity. As a contemporary historian, however, it is my duty not merely to relate facts, but also the impression made by them, and such as it still exists, in the minds of the chief commanders of the two corps of the allied army, the agents and the victims.

The Prussians had been merely waiting for an op-



portunity to put an end to a forced alliance ; that opportunity arrived, and they availed themselves of it. However, not only did they refuse to deliver up Macdonald to the enemy, but they determined not even to quit him till they had extricated him from the power of Russia, and placed him in a state of security ; when Macdonald, on his part, found himself about to be abandoned, but at the same time without being able to bring any positive proof of it, he persisted in staying at Tilsit, at the mercy of the Prussians, rather than his too prompt and sudden retreat should furnish them with a motive or plea for their defection.

The Prussians did not abuse this liberal and noble conduct. They were chargeable with defection but not with treachery, which, in the present age, and after the endurance of so many sufferings, may still be considered as a merit of some consequence. They did not join the Russians. Having reached their own frontier, they felt a repugnance to aid their conqueror in defending their country against those who presented themselves as her liberators, and who actually were so : they observed a state of neutrality, and did not, we must again repeat, proceed even to this extent till Macdonald, disengaged both from Russia and the Russians, had his retreat open before him.

The marshal continued this retreat on Königsberg, by way of Labiau and Tente. His rear was secured by Mortier and the division Heudelet, whose recently arrived forces were still occupying Insterberg, and keeping in check Tchitchakof. On the 3rd of January, his junction with Mortier was accomplished, and he covered Königsberg.

It was, however, a fortunate circumstance for the reputation of Yorck that Macdonald, weakened as he was, and having had his retreat interrupted by that

Prussian general's defection, was in fact enabled to rejoin the grand army. The inconceivable slowness of Wittgenstein's march saved the marshal: the Russian general, however, came up with him at Labiau and Tente; and there, but for the efforts of Bachelu and his brigade, but for the intrepidity of the Polish colonel and captain Kameski and Ostrowski, and of the Bavarian captain Mayer, Macdonald's corps, in its then state of abandonment, would have been defeated if not destroyed. Yorck would then have been supposed to have betrayed it to the enemy, and history would with every appearance of reason have branded him with the appellation of traitor. Six hundred French, Bavarians, and Poles were slain upon these two fields of battle; and their blood cries out in accusation against the Prussians for not guaranteeing, by one additional article, the retreat of the chief whom they had deserted.

The king of Prussia disavowed the proceedings of Yorck. He dismissed him from his command, appointed Kleist to succeed him, and ordered the new commander to arrest his former chief, and send him as well as Massenbach to Berlin, to undergo a trial there. But these generals retained their command notwithstanding. The Prussian army conceived their sovereign to be under duress, an opinion founded on the circumstance of Augereau and a number of French troops being at that time at Berlin.

Frederick, however, was by no means unacquainted with our reverses. At Smorgony, Narbonne had accepted his mission to that monarch only on condition that Napoleon would allow an unbounded frankness of communication. It has been affirmed by him, and Augereau and several others, that Frederick was held to his engagements not merely by his being situated

in the midst of the grand army, and by his apprehension of Napoleon's reappearing with a new and perhaps equally formidable army as at first, but also by the solemn pledge of sworn treaties: for, in the moral as well as the natural world, every thing is mixed, and each of our actions is the result of very different but co-operating motives. But at length, however, his good faith gave way before necessity; his first fear yielded to a greater one. He was, it is said, menaced by his own subjects and our enemies with what would have amounted to the loss of his crown.

We cannot help remarking that the Prussian people who thus compelled their sovereign to sanction the proceedings of Yorck, ventured upon their emancipation only with great slowness and caution, with the Russians within view and able to assist them, and not before our feeble remains had quitted their territory. In the course of this retreat a single fact will decidedly show the feeling of this nation; and how completely, notwithstanding the strength of its hatred to us, it had been bowed down under the ascendancy of our long series of victories.

Davoust, on being recalled to France, passed, with two others only, through \*\*\*\*\*. The inhabitants of that town were in expectation of the Russians, and at the sight of these last Frenchmen on their return, became highly irritated. Groans and hisses, and all the various methods by which crowds of men stimulate the individuals composing them were employed on this occasion, and shouts of menace soon succeeded each other with increasing violence. In a short time the most infuriated among them surrounded the marshal's carriage, and were already unharnessing the horses, when Davoust made his appearance, and rushing upon the most insolent of the rioters dragged him behind

his carriage, and ordered his domestics to bind him fast to it. The populace, awe-struck by the action, instantly suspended their outrage, and for a moment became motionless with consternation; and then silently opened a passage for the marshal who drove through the midst of them unresistedly carrying off his captive with him.

## CHAPTER X

Thus rapidly fell our left wing. On our right wing, on the side of the Austrians, who were kept in check by a well-cemented alliance, a slow phlegmatic nation despotically governed by a close aristocracy, nothing sudden and violent was to be apprehended. This wing also detached itself from us, but by insensible degrees and with the forms and caution which its political position required.

On the 10th of December, Schwartzenberg was at Slonim, presenting advanced guards in succession towards Minsk, Nowogrodeck, and Bielitz. He was still persuaded that the Russians were defeated and in flight before Napoleon, when he at once heard of the departure of the emperor and the destruction of the grand army, but this only in a general and vague way, so that he was for some time without direction.

In this state of embarrassment he applied to the French ambassador at Warsaw. That minister in his reply, "authorized him not to sacrifice a single man more." On the 14th of December, therefore, he withdrew from Slonim to Bialystock. An instruction from Murat, which he received while engaged in

making this movement, was in perfect conformity with it."

About the 21st of December, an order from Alexander suspended hostilities in this quarter; and, as the interests of the Austrians were in union with those of the Russians, they soon came to a good understanding. A moveable armistice, sanctioned by Murat, was entered into: the Russian general and Schwarzenberg were to manœuvre in front of each other, the Russian on the offensive, and the Austrian on the defensive, but to avoid coming to actual hostilities.

The corps of Regnier, reduced to ten thousand men, was not included in this arrangement; but Schwarzenberg, while yielding to circumstances, at the same time persevered in his fidelity. He sent in an account of every thing to the head of the army; he covered with his Austrian troops the whole of the French line, and preserved it. The prince would not suffer himself to deviate from his duty out of any complaisance and deferential attention to the enemy; he believed nothing merely upon that enemy's statement; he resolved before he abandoned any position to ascertain by his own inspection that he was giving it up only to a force superior to his own and prepared to contend for it by arms. Following up this system, he at length arrived on the Bug and the Narew, from Nur to Ostrolenko, where hostilities ceased.

He was thus covering Warsaw, when, on the 22nd of January, his government ordered him to evacuate the Grand Duchy, to separate his retreat from that of Regnier, and to re-enter Galicia. Schwarzenberg obeyed this instruction, but slowly: he resisted both the urgent solicitations and threatening manœuvres of Miloradowitch up to the 25th of January; and even then he proceeded very tardily in his retreat upon

Warsaw, in order to give time for the evacuation of the hospitals and the greater part of the magazines. He also procured for the inhabitants of that city a capitulation much more favourable than they had expected; and he even went still farther, by not delivering it up till the 8th, although the 5th had been the day appointed for that purpose, thus giving Regnier the advantage of three days over the Russians.

Regnier, indeed, was afterwards overtaken and surprised at Kalitch, but that was in consequence of his stopping too long in that place in order to protect the flight of some Polish depôts. In the first confusion occasioned by this unexpected attack, a Saxon brigade found itself separated from the French corps, and retreated upon Schwartzenberg, who received it amicably. Austria permitted it to pass through her territories, and restored it to the grand army near Dresden.

However, on the 1st of January, 1813, at Königsberg, where Murat was still, the actual desertion of the Prussians, and that contemplated by Austria, were unknown, when on a sudden Macdonald's despatch, and the insurrection of the inhabitants of Königsberg, apprized him of the commencement of a defection the consequences of which it was impossible to foresee. The consternation was great. The sedition was first attempted to be put down by representations, for which, however, Ney was soon obliged to substitute menaces. Murat hastened his departure for Elbing. Königsberg was incumbered with ten thousand sick and wounded, the greater part of whom were abandoned to the generosity of their enemies. Some of them had no occasion to complain of this transfer, but several of the prisoners who found means to escape asserted that many of their unfortunate companions were massacred and thrown out of the windows into the streets, and

even that a hospital which contained some hundreds of sick was wilfully set on fire. These horrid cruelties they imputed to the inhabitants.

In another quarter, at Wilna, more than sixteen thousand of our prisoners had already perished. The convent of St. Basil had contained the greater number of them, and from the 10th to the 23rd of December these had received nothing but a few biscuits; they could not obtain even the smallest quantity of wood for firing, nor even a drop of water. The burning thirst of the survivors was quenched only by the snow found in the courts which were covered over with the bodies of the dead. Those of the dead that could not be kept any longer in the corridors, on the staircases, or among the heaps of bodies accumulated in each of the halls, had been thrown out of the windows. The new prisoners who were now brought in every instant were thrust into this infernal abode.

The arrival of the emperor Alexander and his brother alone put an end to these abominations, which had continued for thirteen days; and if out of the twenty thousand of our captive countrymen a few hundred eventually escaped, they were indebted to these two princes for their preservation. But already the exhalations from so many diseased and putrid bodies had given rise to a cruel epidemic, which passed from the conquered to the conquerors, and avenged the treatment which our troops had received. The Russian, however, lived in abundance. Our magazines at Smorgony and Wilna had not been destroyed, and they must have found immense accumulations of provisions as they followed up our route.

In the mean time, Wittgenstein, who had been despatched against Macdonald, had descended the Niemen, and Tchitchakof and Platof had followed

Murat towards Kowno, Wilkowsky, and Insterburg ; but the admiral was soon afterwards despatched to Thorn. Finally, on the 9th of January, Alexander and Kutusof arrived on the Niemen at Merez. There, being about to cross his own frontier, the Russian emperor addressed to his troops a proclamation quite inflated with imagery and comparisons, and more especially with commendations to which winter had a juster claim than his army.

## CHAPTER XI.

It was not till the 22nd of January, and the following days, that the Russians arrived on the banks of the Vistula. During this very slow march, from the 3rd to the 11th of January, Murat had remained at Elbing. In this situation of difficulty that prince was impelled forward and backward, the mere sport of the elements in operation around him ; sometimes soaring in hope to the skies, and sometimes sunk in the lowest abyss of anxiety and despondence.

He had just fled from Konigsberg in a state of complete dejection, when this suspension of the march of the Russians, and the junction of Macdonald, whose forces had been doubled by his reunion with Heudelet and Cavaignac, elated him suddenly with extravagant hopes. He who the day before had conceived that all was lost was now disposed to assume the offensive, and immediately made arrangements accordingly. For his mind was of the order of those which are deciding and of course changing every instant. On that day he determined to push on against the enemy, and on the next, to betake himself to flight as far as Posen.



This last determination was not adopted without sufficient ground. The rallying of the army on the Vistula had been ineffective and illusory. The old guard reckoned at most only five hundred effective men; the young guard, scarcely any; the first corps, eighteen hundred; the second a thousand; the third sixteen hundred; the fourth seventeen hundred; and the greater number even of those were scarcely able to make use of their arms.

In this state of debility, the two wings having just detached themselves from us, Austria and Prussia both failing us at once, Poland became a snare in which we might be suddenly enclosed. Napoleon, moreover, who never could consent to any cession, was determined to defend Dantzic; all that were capable of service, therefore, must necessarily be thrown into that place.

Besides, if we must disclose the real state of things, when Murat, at Elbing, conceived the intention of reorganizing the army, and even indulged himself in dreams of victory, he found that the greater number of the chiefs themselves were exhausted and disheartened. Misfortune, which naturally leads men to be apprehensive of every thing, and at length to believe all that they apprehend, had made a deep impression on their feelings. Already several had become anxious about their rank, about their grades, about the estates they possessed in the conquered countries; and the ambition of most of them extended no farther than to the repassing of the Rhine.

As to the recruits that were arriving, they were men collected from several nations of Germany. In order to join us, they had to pass through the Prussian states, from which were now rising exhalations of fierce and bitter hatred. As they drew near us, they

met with desponding looks and disgusting rout; and on entering the line, instead of being mixed up with and supported by veteran soldiers, they found themselves obliged to contend single-handed against all the scourges of unsuccessful warfare in defence of a cause abandoned by those most interested in its success. Accordingly, the greater part of these Germans deserted in the course of their first bivouac.

On seeing the distress and disasters of the army which had returned from Moscow, the tried veteran troops of Macdonald were themselves shaken. However, this *corps d'armée*, and the newly raised division of d'Heudelet preserved their compactness and discipline. All that remained were now as soon as possible to be united at Dantzic, which in a short time enclosed within its walls thirty-five thousand soldiers of seventeen different nations. The rest of the scattered troops, consisting only of a small number, were to commence rallying when they arrived at Posen and the Oder.

Thus far, then, it was scarcely possible for the king of Naples to have regulated our retreating and routed army to better advantage. But at the moment when he was passing through Marienwerder to go on to Posen, a letter from Naples arrived, which again upset all his resolutions. The impression made on him by it was violent; and, as he proceeded in reading, the bile so evidently and instantaneously mingled with his blood, that in a few moments his face exhibited the appearance of complete jaundice.

It seems that an act of government which the queen had permitted herself to authorize had wounded him in one of the most susceptible of his passions. The charms of that princess, great as they were, excited but little of his jealousy; but of his political power, he

was jealous in the extreme, and the queen, as sister of the emperor, was the person of whom he entertained in this respect the greatest apprehension.

It excited no little astonishment to see this prince, who had thus far appeared to sacrifice every thing to military glory, suffer himself to be now mastered by a less noble passion. For characters of a certain description, however, it seems as if there must be always one predominant.

Besides, it was in both cases one and the same ambition, influencing under different forms, and under each of these entire and uncontrollable; as is always the case with characters of impetuous and impassioned feeling. At the moment in question, his jealousy of his authority prevailed over his love of glory. It hurried him forward rapidly to Posen, where, soon after his arrival, he abandoned us and disappeared.

This defection took place on the 16th of January, twenty-three days before Schwartzberg disconnected himself from the French army of which prince Eugene assumed the command.

Alexander stopped the march of his troops at Kalitch. At that place the violent and continued warfare which had followed us all the way from Moscow relaxed, and dwindled; all the advance of spring into a system of hostility feeble, intermitting, and languid. The strength of the disorder seemed to be exhausted; but, in fact, that was the case only with the strength of the combatants. A greater struggle still was in preparation; and the halt allowed at Kalitch was not a concession made to peace but a period devoted to arrangements for renewed slaughter.

## CHAPTER XII.

THE star of the north thus obtained the ascendancy over that of Napoleon. Is it then the fate of the south to be ever conquered by the north? Cannot the south subjugate that in its turn? Is the success of such an attempt completely against nature? And must the melancholy and frightful issue of our invasion be considered only as an additional proof that it is so?

Unquestionably the current of the human race is not towards the north. Their tendency and inclination are towards the south; they turn their backs upon the north, and their prospects, their desires, and their movements are directed to the animating and all-cheering sun. It appears to be impossible to attempt with impunity to stem this grand tide of human inundation. To endeavour to counteract and turn it back, and confine it amidst its native ice, is a gigantic and perhaps impracticable enterprise. The Romans exhausted themselves in the attempt. Charlemagne, although he was in the height of his power when one of these overflows had nearly spent its strength, could check it only for a few moments. The remains of the torrent, forced back towards the east of his empire, found a passage by the north, and completed the subdued devastation.

Since that time, a thousand years have rolled away, a period which the inhabitants of the north required in order to repair the loss of so vast an emigration, and to acquire the knowledge at present indispensable to a nation of conquerors. During this interval, the Hanseatic towns judiciously opposed the introduction of the arts and science of war into the immense camp of the Scandinavians. The event justified their policy. Scarcely had that science penetrated into it before the

armies of Russia were seen on the Elbe, and shortly after in Italy. They came then to reconnoitre it, but they will at a future period come to settle in it.

During the last century, either from feelings of philanthropy or vanity, Europe eagerly concurred in the civilization of the natives of the north, whom Peter had already converted into formidable warriors. She acted wisely in thus diminishing the danger of her being again replunged in barbarism; although, perhaps, to fall back into the darkness of the middle age may be now considered as scarcely possible, as war is become a matter of science in which intellect is sure to prevail against ignorance, and success in which must be the result of information and instruction, which nations still barbarous can acquire only by becoming civilized.

But in forwarding the civilization of the inhabitants of the north, Europe has perhaps accelerated the epoch of their new overflow. For it must not be imagined that their showy cities and exotic and forced luxury will ever keep them back, or, by rendering them weak and effeminate, either fix them in their native regions or render them less formidable on quitting them. The luxury and softness thus enjoyed in climes so rough and barbarous can never be the privilege of more than a few. The masses of the population, constantly increasing under the government of an improving administration, will still suffer under the horrors of a climate which they will resemble in rudeness and barbarism, and view with constantly growing envy the natives of more genial territories; and the invasion of the south by the north, recommenced by Catherine II, will thus continue.

Who in fact can flatter himself that the grand struggle of the north against the south is at an end?

Is this struggle in reality any thing else than an exhibition upon an immense scale of that war of privation against enjoyment, that eternal conflict of the poor against the rich, which fastens on the vitals of every empire?

Whatever, my dear companions, might be the motives of our expedition, it was in this respect at least of consequence to Europe. Its object was to wrest Poland from Russia; its successful result would have been to retard the danger of a new invasion from the north, to weaken the torrent, and oppose to it a new dike; and how great a man, and what peculiarly favourable circumstances were combined to promote the success of so grand an enterprise!

After fifteen hundred years of victories, the revolution of the fourth century, that of kings and nobles against nations, had just been surpassed by the revolution of the nineteenth, that of nations against nobles and kings. Napoleon was born of this conflagration. He appeared so completely to regulate and master it that the whole momentous convulsion seemed only to be a natural accompaniment to the birth of so great a man. He commanded the Revolution as if he had been the genius of that dreadful element. To his voice she bowed submissively. Ashamed of her excesses, she looked upon him at once as her offspring and her pride, and identifying herself with his glory she united Europe under his sceptre; and obedient Europe marched at his signal to drive back Russia within her ancient limits. It seemed as if the North was about to be conquered, in his turn, even amidst his icy deserts.

Yet this highly distinguished man, under even such highly propitious circumstances, was unable to prevail against nature! In the powerful effort which

he made to ascend that steep acclivity, how much force was still wanting! After reaching the frozen regions of Europe, he was there hurled from all his elevation! And the North, victorious over the South in its defensive conflict as it was in the middle age in its war for conquest, now considers itself both unassailable and irresistible.

Do not, however, my dear comrades, believe this! That soil, that boundless territory, that climate, that rough, ferocious, and gigantic nature, you might have triumphed over, as you actually triumphed over Russian soldiers!

But some errors were punished by severe calamities. I have related both. On that sea of evils I have raised a gloomy watch-tower, exhibiting a mournful and blood-stained light; and, if my weak hand has not been fully adequate to the execution, at least I shall have exhibited our floating wrecks, that those who come after us may see and avoid the causes of our ruin.

My task, my dear companions, is now finished; and it belongs to you to give your testimony with respect to the correctness of the picture. Its colours will undoubtedly appear to you faint and feeble, filled as your minds must be with the recollection of events so deeply impressive. You all, however, will know that action is always more eloquent than narrative, and that if great historians are made by great men, they are even still more rarely to be met with.

THE END.



















